



BELGIUM · BELGIQUE · BELGIË · BELGIEN

National reform

Programme

2023

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Introduction

In this National Reform Programme (NRP), the various governments report on the most important structural reforms and investments of the past year and what measures can be expected in the near future. The NRP is complementary to the fiscal measures included in the Stability Programme and builds on the priorities of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).

Belgium experienced a strong post-pandemic economic recovery in 2021 partly due to the successful crisis policies of the various governments that managed to preserve the economic fabric during the pandemic. The stronger growth figures in 2021 also meant that our country would receive significantly less European resources from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (4.52 billion euros instead of 5.92 billion euros, which is a 23.64% drop). The governments are currently working on submitting the first payment request, and over the past year significant progress was made in project implementation. Despite the reduced budget, it was decided to implement all federal projects from the original NRRP. In addition, the federal government decided on an additional phased investment stimulus totalling 1.6 billion euros. The federated entities are also continuing the implementation of their recovery plans. In Flanders, the Flemish recovery plan (Vlaamse veerkracht), good for 4.3 billion euros, will be implemented in its entirety, thus including the Flemish projects taken out of the original NRRP as a result of the reduced budget. The Flemish government is monitoring the Flemish recovery plan very closely. In Wallonia, 42 priority projects were subjected to a specific methodology for co-construction and to specific monitoring with social and environmental partners. In Brussels, the implementation of the regional recovery and redevelopment plan continues. At nearly 500 million euros, this plan rests on three pillars: (i) socioeconomic transition and work, (ii) welfare and health policies, and (iii) territorial development and environment. In the context of successive crises, the government of the German-speaking Community prepared a comprehensive recovery and reconstruction plan. 720 million euros have been allocated for this purpose. 181 million euros will be spent on investments in climate protection. Another 150 million euros is earmarked for a large-scale programme to build climate-neutral schools. Furthermore, the government has decided to equip the community with a 100% fibre optic network. 40 million euros are planned for this project alone. In addition, investments in zoning, older people's care, housing, child and youth care, the two hospitals and other areas should enable the region to face the future and show resilience after the crises.

2022 was a year of economic turbulence. The illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine led to war on the European continent and created an unprecedented period of economic uncertainty in Europe with significant growth slowdowns, rising energy prices and skyrocketing inflation. The priority for the various governments in our country largely shifted to protecting the purchasing power of families, safeguarding the economic fabric of Belgium and accelerating its independence from fossil fuels. All this resulted in a new set of temporary support measures with an additional

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budgetary cost. From a macroeconomic perspective, it can be said that the crisis policies of the various governments have borne fruit. The Belgian economy has proved quite resilient, partly due to automatic wage indexation and the various energy support measures, which have kept domestic demand buoyant, as well as the strong performance of the labour market. Economic growth slowed sharply during 2022 but did not culminate in the recession that was initially feared.

Notwithstanding the short-term challenges and geopolitical developments, the various governments have moved decisively to address structural vulnerabilities and the larger challenges such as digitization and climate. The changing interest rate environment also demonstrates the importance of reducing the fiscal deficit in order to maintain sufficient policy space to be able to pursue appropriate investment policies in the future and have sufficient clout to face a possible next crisis. The various governments will pursue appropriate policies with flexibility, taking into account the analysis of the latest economic data and the changing geopolitical and international environment. These policies will build on our strengths, including our capacity for innovation, the integration of our companies into the global value chain, the educational level of the population and the high level of productivity. But these policies will also be committed to reforms to address our weaknesses, including limited labour productivity growth, inadequate labour market participation, low labour mobility and mismatches and shortages of certain job profiles, relatively high greenhouse gas emissions and infrastructure deficiencies. Governments are also paying particular policy attention to the challenges facing our SMEs that make up the lion's share of our economic fabric. In the current crisis context, they face major competitiveness challenges and also have specific needs.

The NRP is structured as follows. Chapter 2 briefly discusses macroeconomic projections for our country. Chapter 3 provides an overview of key reforms and investments by the various governments in the following areas: (i) budget and public debt; (ii) labour market, training and education; (iii) entrepreneurship, competition, innovation and digitalization; (iv) energy, mobility and sustainability; and (v) social protection and inclusion. Chapter 4 provides a brief overview of the status of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Chapter 5 outlines the use of structural and investment funds, and Chapter 6 describes the institutional process and stakeholder involvement in the preparation of this NRP. The annexes present the reform plans of the regions and communities. The Fenix database (on the NRRP) and CeSaR database (on country-specific recommendations) were updated on 1 March 2023.

Economic outlook for Belgium¹

Like the rest of the eurozone, GDP growth is expected to gradually pick up over the course of this year, thanks mainly to the cooling of inflation. On an annual basis, Belgian GDP growth nevertheless remains limited to 1.0%, after 3.1% in 2022. It should accelerate significantly to 1.7% in 2024, driven by a resumption of business and household investment and a pick-up in private consumption growth thanks to the purchasing power recovery. From 2025 to 2028, GDP growth is predicted to average 1.4%. Over the 2020–2028 period, which includes the corona and energy crises and subsequent recovery, the Belgian economy is expected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.3%.

The war in Ukraine led to record prices for natural gas and electricity on the European continent. As a result, Belgian consumer price inflation rose to 9.6% in 2022. Since October 2022, fears of major problems in natural gas supplies have subsided and consumer prices for energy products have fallen significantly, although they remain high from a historical perspective. Energy prices should be lower this year than in 2022 and make a negative contribution to inflation.

Underlying inflation rose sharply last year and should remain high, bringing total inflation to 4.5% this year. Underlying inflation should continue to decline next year, but it will take until 2025 for the upward impact of second-round effects to die out and fall below the 2% mark. Overall, inflation should follow a similar path, reaching 2.9% in 2024 before falling back to an average of 1.7% during the years 2025–2028.

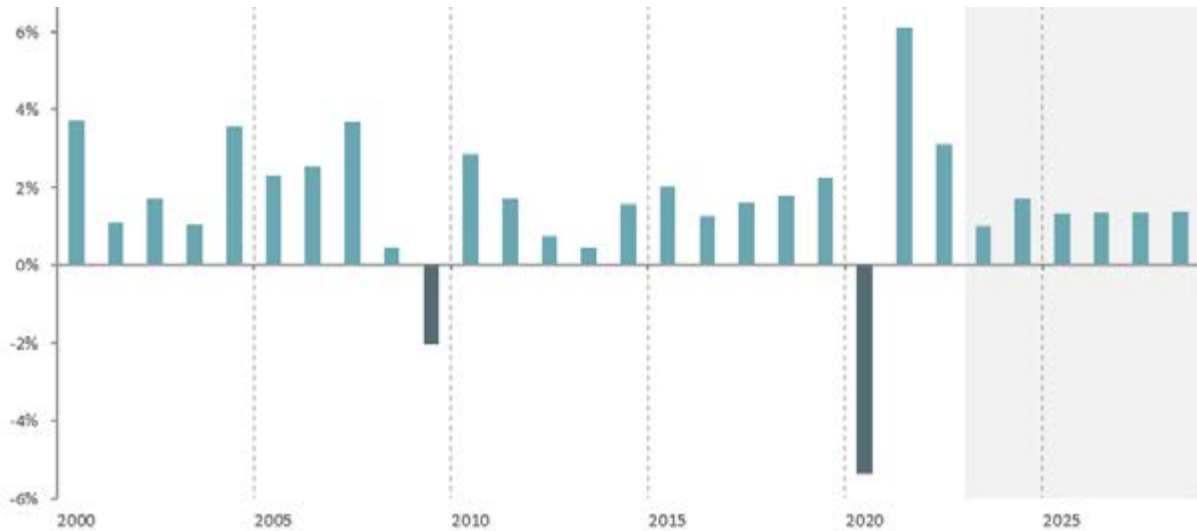
Domestic employment grew exceptionally strong last year, partly due to continued recovery after the corona shock. However, job creation was largely absorbed by a rising labour supply as activity rates rose sharply. Consequently, the administrative unemployment rate fell only slightly, from 8.4% in 2021 to 8.1% in 2022.

The growth of activity in the market sector is expected to slow significantly in 2023, which would reduce the increase in domestic employment to 38 100 people, which is insufficient to absorb the increase in labour supply (+48 800 people). In 2024, job creation is forecast to pick up slightly. This improvement will only be located in the market sector, while the increase in government employment will continue to weaken. At the same time, the increase in the labour force will

¹ This outlook is a contribution to the preparation of the new Stability Programme and the National Reform Programme. The macroeconomic parameters were approved by the board of directors of the Institute of National Accounts. The Federal Planning Bureau's 2022-2027 regional outlook is available at <https://www.plan.be/publications/publication-2267-en->.

diminish as the impetus from demographics and from rising participation at younger ages dies out. The unemployment rate will fall to 7.9% by 2024.

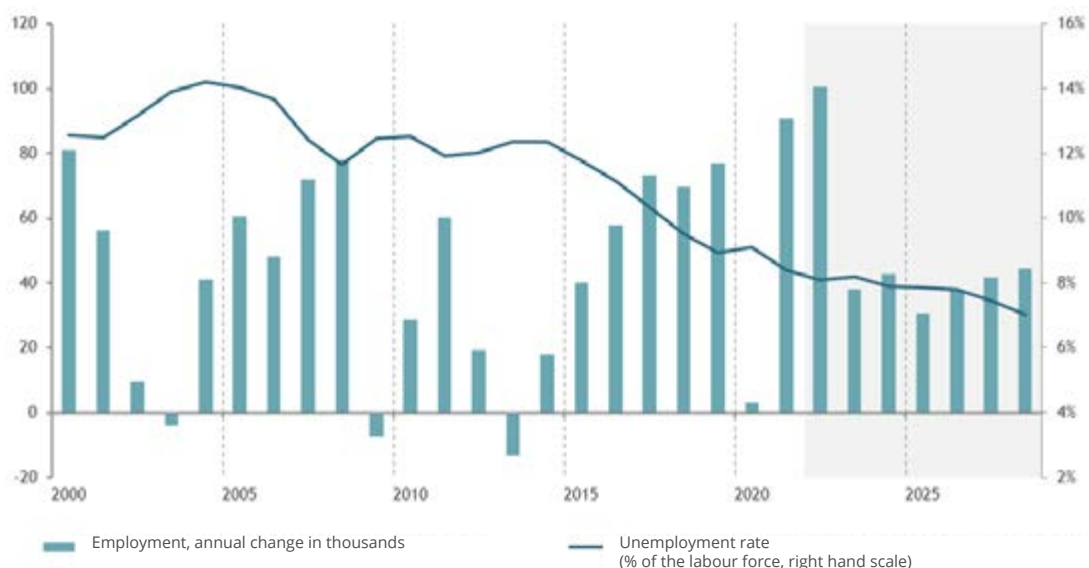
Fig. 1 | GDP in volume
Growth rates in %



Sources: ICN/INR, FPB

From 2025 to 2028, activity in the market sector is projected to grow evenly. Productivity growth per hour will pick up to 0.7% per year during this period, which will be in line with the real growth of labour costs per hour, so that the volume of labour will also experience a nearly constant growth. Working hours are forecast to increase slightly in 2025–2026, before stabilizing. In that context, market employment growth would show a slightly increasing profile. Domestic employment growth will admittedly be slightly lower given the limited increase in government employment during that period.

Fig. 2 | Employment and unemployment rate
Administrative definition



Sources: ICN/INR, ONEM/RVA, FPB

The increase in the labour force is projected to pick up in 2025–2026 due to the raising of the statutory retirement age to 66. The unemployment rate will remain almost stable during this period. In 2027–2028, the increase in labour supply is forecast to weaken and employment growth is forecast to slightly accelerate, leading to a significant drop in unemployment. The administrative unemployment rate is expected to fall to 7.0% by 2028. The harmonized Eurostat unemployment rate will shrink from 5.6% in 2022 to 4.9% in the medium term.

Over the entire 2023–2028 period, employment is expected to increase by 235 900, which is a significantly lower increase than during the past six years, but productivity growth in the market sector was significantly lower and government employment increased more strongly. The employment rate was already sharply above pre-corona levels last year. It should reach 72.3% this year (up from 70.5% in 2019 and 71.9% in 2022), despite its increase being slowed by the influx of Ukrainian refugees². In the medium term, it should climb steadily, reaching 74.4% by 2028.

Table 1 | Key figures for the Belgian economy
Percentages of change in volume unless otherwise stated

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Consumer spending by households	5,5	4,0	1,6	1,9	1,7	1,3	1,4	1,3
Government consumption expenditure	4,8	1,2	1,1	0,8	0,9	1,2	1,3	1,3
Gross fixed capital formation	4,9	-1,0	0,8	2,8	1,6	1,7	0,7	1,8
Total national spending	5,6	2,8	1,2	1,8	1,4	1,4	1,2	1,4
Exports of goods and services	11,3	4,9	2,3	2,5	3,3	3,4	2,6	2,8
Imports of goods and services	10,7	4,6	2,5	2,6	3,3	3,3	2,4	2,8
Net exports (contribution to GDP growth)	0,7	0,3	-0,3	-0,2	-0,2	-0,1	0,1	-0,1
Gross domestic product	6,1	3,1	1,0	1,7	1,3	1,4	1,4	1,4
National consumer price index	2,4	9,6	4,5	2,9	1,8	1,7	1,7	1,7
Health Index	2,0	9,3	4,9	3,2	1,8	1,7	1,7	1,7
Real disposable income of households	1,3	-1,6	4,2	1,5	1,7	1,4	1,4	1,3
Savings rate of households (as a % of disposable income)	17,0	12,2	14,4	13,9	13,9	13,8	13,8	13,7
Domestic employment (annual average change, in thousands)	90,8	100,4	38,1	42,7	30,7	38,1	41,9	44,5
Employment rate (EU2030 draft (20-64 years old; LFS definition)) (%)	70,6	72,0	72,3	72,9	73,2	73,5	73,9	74,4
Unemployment rate (Eurostat standard) (%)	6,3	5,6	5,7	5,5	5,4	5,4	5,1	4,9
Current account balance (balance of payments, as a % of GDP)	0,4	-4,9	-3,9	-3,6	-3,7	-3,8	-3,7	-3,9

Source: FPB

² For detailed data: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/work-training/labour-market/employment-and-unemployment>.

Addressing key challenges to the economy, labour market and social cohesion

1. Budget and public debt (including revenues and expenditures)

1.1. General context

The budgetary context remained difficult in 2022. After the global pandemic, it was the war in Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis that disrupted public finances. Accordingly, the federal and regional governments have taken measures to mitigate the effects of the crisis while maintaining a stable, sustainable and balanced fiscal path.

The federal government will achieve an effort of at least 1.6% of GDP between 2020 and 2024. At the start of the legislature in 2020, it was decided to make a fixed annual effort of 0.2% of GDP, i.e. 0.8% by 2024. Furthermore, it was agreed to realize an additional variable effort each year that depends on the growth and recovery of the economy. For 2022, this additional effort was 0.3% of GDP. For 2023–2024, the effort of 0.2% of GDP decided upon during the 2023 budget preparation was increased by 0.3% of GDP to 0.5% of GDP at the 2023 budgetary review. Together with the better-than-expected projections in constant policy, this will bring the deficit of Entity I (the federal government and social security) to 3.5% at the end of 2023, instead of the 4.1% projected during the budget preparation. In 2024, the deficit will drop further to 3.2%.

The Flemish government is strongly committed to maintaining healthy public finances and strengthening structural growth. A budgetary path has been established whereby Flanders will return to a balanced budget from 2027 onwards (excluding investment spending for Oosterweel). The Flemish budget deficit is estimated at 2.9 billion euros in 2023, evolving to a deficit of 409 million euros in 2027. These deficits include the construction costs associated with the Oosterweel connection and the Flemish recovery plan (Vlaamse veerkracht).

The Brussels government wants to maintain a stable budgetary path that guarantees a structural balance without increasing the overall tax burden on Brussels households. Not only the living standards of the current generation, but also those of future generations are at stake. The Brussels government's objective remains to return to a balanced budget by 2024, excluding certain strategic investments that will bring prosperity and growth. Furthermore, multi-year rationalization processes to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending (particularly through spending reviews) will continue. In May 2022, the government of the Brussels-Capital Region validated the programme to optimize performance and institutional transition (OPTIris), and thus the overall vision, action plan and proposed methodology. The programme targets 60 million euros a year in structural savings at the regional level.

The Walloon government is committed to keeping Wallonia's debt level under control through a structural effort that will allow it to change its trajectory in the medium term without sacrificing its recovery objectives and its future capacity to implement new policies. Specifically, the Walloon government constantly monitors the dynamics of the debt, to accentuate the integrated management of the treasury and of direct and indirect debt, and to implement a gradual strategy of stabilization and reduction of the debt ratio thanks to a continuous and structural improvement of the gross balance to be financed. This effort will structurally lead to a stabilization of the debt ratio starting in 2024, with a positive inflection starting in 2026. Thus, 400 million euros have been structurally saved since 2021 to limit debt growth: 150 million euros in 2022 and 250 million euros in 2023. These efforts have focused in particular on the monitoring and adjustment of all expenditures and revenues, the reduction of ministerial allowances and the control of expenditures in the administrations and offices, the dynamic management of the region's financial contributions, the optimization of the collection of administrative fines, and the reform of the system of employment aid and business vouchers. These efforts also took into account the worsening conditions in the financial markets, especially the rise in interest rates. Thus, Wallonia will limit its need for new loans on the financial markets to 2.5 billion euros. For the 2023 budget, the gross balance to be financed has been reduced to 3.141 billion euros, an improvement of 994 million euros from the original 2022 budget. The ESA balance is 2.57 billion euros, which is 500 million euros better than in 2022. Finally, the government's budget trajectory (i.e. excluding spending on Covid-19, river floods, recovery, Ukraine and energy), which envisions a return to balance by 2024, is confirmed. So, it amounts to -111 million euros in 2023.

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation closed 2021 with a deficit of 821 million euros and 2022 with a deficit of 882 million euros (provisional closure). A similar deficit of 864 million euros is expected in 2023. This deficit situation is the result of the decline in growth in 2020, which caused a sharp drop in the revenues of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, which consist mainly of allocations linked to inflation and GDP growth. It is also the result of the continued implementation of several reforms that are essential for the future of Francophone people: the educational programme (Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence), the refinancing of higher education and the reform of childcare. In this context, the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation has taken several decisions to strengthen the efficiency of its spending through an ambitious spending review. The management of the budget was strengthened to institutionalize the management of future spending revisions, which should soon become a decree. Moreover, given the current high financing needs, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is continuing its efforts in terms of diversification of financing sources and attractiveness to investors in order to reduce its financing costs.

The government of the German-speaking Community presented a balanced budget up to and including 2020. Since then, however, the government has made a conscious decision to temporarily forgo a balanced budget to implement important support and investment measures. All these projects are aimed at drawing the right conclusions from the crises and maintaining the quality of life and life prospects in the community as best as possible. In particular, climate protection, health and digitalization play important roles. At the same time, being aware of the importance of

a sound financial policy, the German-speaking Community has decided to establish a debt ceiling and rebalance the entire current budget. The goal is to return to a balanced budget from 2025 by neutralizing investments, and to achieve a balanced budget according to ESA standards from 2029 without neutralizing investments. In 2022, the deficit was 12.4 million euros. Moreover, for the first time, the German-speaking Community is using the method of neutralizing investments for 68.3 million euros. The ESA result was thus -80.7 million euros in 2022. In 2023, the deficit amounts to 73.8 million euros. Furthermore, the German-speaking Community neutralizes investments amounting to 198.8 million euros. Thus, the ESA result is -272.7 million euros in 2023. However, 2023 is characterized by numerous one-shots and exceptional expenditures for technical reasons on budgetary accounting. For example, the German-speaking Community will pay back all of its PPPs in full by 2023. A systematic process of screening and budgetary consolidation within optional expenditures each year has led to savings of about 100 million euros since 2021. In particular, the measures introduced include a hiring freeze (the non-replacement of leavers) combined with effective staff reductions and a freeze in staffing levels across the civil service.

1.2. Crisis management and budgetary measures

In the autumn of 2022, the federal government prepared a budget for 2023 and 2024. This budget contains a number of crisis measures to secure the energy supply of Belgians, reduce household energy bills and support the competitiveness of SMEs and businesses. The crisis measures are combined with the planning of structural reforms. The government also took a first step in tax reform with the tax shift in 2022 to strengthen the purchasing power of low- and middle-income earners.

Fiscal policy has been strained by successive crises. Post-pandemic support measures are gradually decreasing: 2 841 million in 2022, 915 in 2023, 296 in 2024 and 70 million in 2025. Moreover, since the beginning of the energy crisis, the federal government has taken several measures to deal with the rise in energy bills and has increased the resources of existing funds (FSM and FGE) to help those who can no longer pay their energy bills. In 2022, the budget cost was estimated at 5.0 billion euros. An additional 0.5 billion in revenue was generated in 2022. Several energy measures have been extended until the first quarter of 2023. In addition, the federal government has since reached an agreement on energy bill reform. VAT on gas and electricity will permanently remain at 6%, but energy excise taxes will be imposed in return. Taking this into account, the budgetary cost in 2023 is estimated at 3.2 billion euros, and the additional revenue at 1.3 billion euros. Finally, the budgetary cost of addressing the refugee crisis following the war in Ukraine was estimated at 387 million euros in 2022. 285 million euros has been set aside for 2023.

The support measures taken by the Brussels government in recent months to deal with the pandemic and the consequences of the war in Ukraine, as well as the targeted measures decided by the government for 2023 to deal with current inflation, have had and will have an impact on the region's financial situation. In view of the energy crisis, subsidies and resources for low- and middle-income households have been significantly increased. Funds were allocated to meet the exceptional social and business needs related to the increase in energy prices and to continue the projects launched with regional support. This is a direct and proactive response by the government to rising prices. Moreover, regarding long-term care for older people, a new ordinance was drafted to better regulate existing practices, to fill unoccupied beds in nursing homes and to achieve a more balanced distribution of efforts between the public, voluntary and private sectors. This new ordinance, adopted at the end of 2022 and published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 30 January 2023, aims to remedy the mismatch between the supply of care facilities for older people and their needs, and to reduce the risk of budget overruns due to the recovery of unoccupied beds. In addition, the Brussels-Capital Region's support enabled the introduction of alternatives to nursing home accommodation in 2022, such as public assisted living projects. The goal now is to evaluate the relevance of these alternative services, which are less expensive than traditional solutions and

enable people to live at home longer, and, if necessary, to establish a regulatory framework to govern their operation and financing.

The Walloon government has taken several measures to help its citizens cope with the crisis, particularly in the areas of food aid and combating fuel and water insecurity. On the fiscal front, the Walloon government approved the principles of car tax reform (road tax and registration tax) to encourage the purchase of new or second-hand vehicles that are lighter, less powerful and emit less CO₂. Monitoring is planned to ensure budget neutrality each year. To facilitate access to housing for first-time buyers, the government has decided to double the exemption on the first purchase³. In addition, for the installation of renewable energy sources on public lands, the property tax exemption will be extended to the production of renewable energy on these lands. To cope with the expected increase in long-term care spending, a series of measures are being taken that focus on different areas: health promotion and prevention that contribute to the reduction of spending; the development and diversification of the supply of alternative places for long-term care institutions (50 000 places); and the collection of data that makes it possible to monitor aging and its effects. A digital assistance project was also launched to facilitate home care.

The Flemish government has opted for a sustainable fiscal policy. This means making efforts to help Flemish citizens and healthy businesses get through the energy crisis in the best way possible. It includes an extension of the employment premium, an additional premium for families on social benefits (Groeipakket) and support for healthy companies facing rising energy costs. This will be a joint effort and resources will be targeted because this is the best guarantee of future prosperity. During the 2022 budget consultations, it was decided to gradually reduce the budget deficit with an effort of 900 million euros by 2024. In the vote on the 2023 budget, it was necessary to make budgetary adjustments due to the energy crisis. The medium-term objective of a sustainable Flemish fiscal policy was reaffirmed. There will be a positive budget balance by 2027 after adjusting the budget target (excluding the major Oosterweel works and the Flemish recovery plan).

The government of the German-speaking Community, like the other Communities, has been in a permanent crisis management mode in recent years. The pandemic, river floods, the Ukraine crisis and the energy and inflation crises have put pressure on the budget. 8 million euros were allocated for the reception and care of Ukrainian refugees alone. When inflation surged in the spring of 2022, the German-speaking Community had to react quickly to deal with the effects of this inflation, as well as the energy crisis. To this end, subsidies in the non-profit sector were directly increased by 2%, with an additional annual cost of about 3 million euros. As prices continued to rise, it was decided during the year to further increase subsidies in the non-commercial sector by 3%, on top of the 1.25% structural increase. In care centres, subsidies were increased by 14.5%. The total increases will provide 29 million euros in additional subsidies until 2029.

1.3. Spending reviews

In principle, all Belgian governments are in the process of structurally anchoring spending reviews in line with RRF milestones. Spending reviews are already integrated into the federal and Flemish government budget process. Follow-up is reported for each completed spending reviews as part of the budget preparation process. Beginning in the fiscal year 2022, the general notes to the budget report on spending reviews completed in the current year, related actions and a schedule of spending reviews to be conducted.

³ 20 000 to 40 000 up to a purchase value of 350 000 euros, then degressive up to a value of 500 000 euros.

For the federal government, the law of 26 December 2022 (amending the law of 22 May 2003) introduced the obligation to include, in the general remarks to the budget each year, a report on the spending reviews completed in the current year, the actions associated with them, and a schedule for the spending reviews to be carried out. This set down in law something that was already being done in practice.

During 2022, the following spending reviews were completed and validated: nuclear liabilities (Belgoprocess, IRE, CEN), BELSPO and FEDWAN. The new spending reviews for the fiscal year 2023 confirmed by the budget conclave are on asylum and migration, cybersecurity and legal fees. The notifications for the 2023–2024 budget in October 2022 also included the themes for the spending reviews to be conducted in the fiscal year 2024. Two fairly broad themes were identified, namely: the review of grants (consistency with other funding; effectiveness; monitoring and control mechanisms; options for harmonizing methodology; and best practices), and the effectiveness of federal support for research and development.

The Flemish government, with support from the NRRP, established the spending reviews project. In the first phase, the broad reviews (Vlaamse brede heroverwegingen – VBH) were carried out, scrutinizing all expenditure items and possibly cost coverage within the Flemish budget. The VBH made a concrete contribution to the drafting of the 2022 budget and the establishment of a multi-year budgetary framework aimed at balancing the budget from 2027. The Flemish government then defined nine themes for more in-depth spending reviews. The results of the spending reviews serve to prepare for the policy choices to be made at the next government formation in 2024. These spending reviews are becoming a structural evaluation practice in Flanders through their integration into the Flemish Codex of public finances (Vlaamse codex van de overheidsfinanciën – VCO). The amended VCO requires that each legislature includes at least one VBH and that a schedule of spending reviews be established and implemented during the legislature.

The Brussels-Capital Region has made progress in integrating spending reviews into the budget process through government decisions in 2022 establishing a strategy and timetable. The intention is to systematically integrate the results of spending reviews into annual and multi-year budget planning, beginning with the drafting of the 2024 budget law. This project is part of the NRRP.

As indicated in the context of the NRRP reforms, the Walloon government and the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation decided at the end of 2022 to establish an annual spending review mechanism based on the OECD recommendations. The purpose of this mechanism is to evaluate spending and policies.

For several years, the German-speaking government has been conducting a systematic and regular budget review. Elements of spending reviews are used for this purpose. The finance minister consults at least twice a year with each department of the civil service to examine each budget allocation with a view to avoiding expenditure increases and limiting discretionary spending. In addition, there are regular private consultations with individual ministers. In doing so, the government takes into account the principle of zero-based budgeting.

1.4. Implementation of the NRRP

The NRRP also contains a number of measures to help improve the composition and efficiency of spending by the various governments through the introduction of spending reviews (R-6). The first milestone of these measures at the federal level, in Flanders and in the Walloon Region has been achieved. In the Brussels-Capital Region, the pilot projects for spending reviews for mobility and social housing have been completed. Based on the PEFA gap analysis and the experience of the pilot projects, a memo with recommendations on integrating spending reviews into the budget process was approved by the government in July 2022.

2. Labour market, training and education

2.1. Labour market

The various governments in this country have a common ambition, as also stipulated in the various coalition agreements, to achieve an 80% employment rate. This is fully in line with the EU target of 78% by 2030 from the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) action plan adopted at the European Social Summit in Porto on 7 May 2021.

In response to the structural challenges in the labour market, the federal government has implemented a labour market reform aimed at improving the training and skills of workers, enabling a better reconciliation of private and professional life, providing a better framework for new forms of work, and contributing to raising the employment rate to 80% by 2030.

To help businesses in the energy crisis and the accompanying record inflation caused by the war in Ukraine, and thus to protect workers and prevent layoffs, the federal government instituted a temporary unemployment scheme for economic reasons 'energy', intended for energy-intensive companies and those that have seen their energy bills rise sharply.

The federal government reached an agreement in November 2022 on a mediation proposal that would allow the social partners to restart the stranded negotiations around wages. The proposal has three components: the system of automatic indexation and pay scale increases will be retained in full, the wage margin will be set at 0% for 2023 and 2024, and a premium will be made possible for employees up to a maximum of 750 euros. For the premium, two options are provided by the federal government: in companies that make high profits, a maximum premium of 500 euros will be possible, and in companies that make exceptionally high profits, a premium between 500 and 750 euros will be possible. The premium will have to be negotiated by the social partners at the sectoral level.

The federal government reached an agreement after consultation with the social partners on the distribution of the welfare budget (*welvaartsenveloppe / enveloppe bien-être*) for 2023 and 2024 that should ensure that social benefits remain in line with the evolution of wages. A first important element is the 1.3% increase in minimum unemployment benefits on top of the index. Another important element is the 2% increase in benefits for all retirees. An increase in minimum wages is also planned, on top of the increases already negotiated in 2021 (and effective in 2022). Part of the welfare budget will be used to increase the net income of low-paid workers through the work bonus.

To reach the 80% employment rate, more than 540 000 additional people will need to be employed. Given the limited number of unemployed people, inactive people will have to be (re)employed. Belgium had about 1 619 000 inactive people (20-64 years old) in 2022, which is 24% of the total population in the 20-64 aged category⁴. To lead these people to work, the federal government has invested in an innovative back-to-work policy (*Terug-naar-werk beleid / politique de Retour au travail*) to help as many long-term and chronically ill people – who are able and willing to work again (voluntarily) – get to jobs faster. The reintegration programmes at people's own employers were also thoroughly reformed so that the focus was again placed on returning to people's own known workplaces, whether in adapted work or not. Initially, the introduction of back-to-work coordinators at the health insurance funds provided better support. In a second phase, a number of accountability measures were installed to ensure that from 1 January 2023, all stakeholders (employers, employees, health insurance funds, mediation services and disability prescribers) were

4 Source: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/work-training/labour-market/employment-and-unemployment>.

committed. A third part of the reform plan includes a number of measures that further strengthen the policy: the new system of the labour participation allowance, an incentive of 1 000 euros for employers who adapt their organization to enable partial work resumption, a back-to-work fund as an alternative to outplacement, expansion of the number of back-to-work coordinators, an interactive calculation tool to estimate the impact of working on net family income, and renewed framework agreements between the national institute for sickness and disability insurance (RIZIV/INAMI), the insurance institutions and the regional employment services. In addition, pathways through external services for prevention and protection at work, pathways for self-employed workers and pathways for civil servants were also reformed. More attention for mental well-being is coming through the burnout track of the federal agency for occupational risks (FEDRIS) and the RIZIV/INAMI project which entails a collaboration between general practitioners and networks of primary care psychologists. A good barometer for measuring the impact of this new policy includes the number of partial work resumptions. The number of wage earners with disabilities who have partially resumed work (progressive work resumption) increased from 69 042 in 2019 to 78 550 in 2022 (situation on 31 December in each year). Of course, 2020 was a special year due to the Covid-19 crisis, with even a decline in that year. In order to increase and accelerate the referral of the long-term sick in Flanders, the Flemish employment service (VDAB), the RIZIV/INAMI and the health insurance funds committed themselves to go to 10 000 new reintegration pathways in Flanders by 2023, and 12 000 by 2024. In Wallonia there will be 3 500 in 2023 and 5 000 in 2024, in Brussels 300 in 2023 and 600 in 2024, and in German-speaking Belgium 20 each year.

Also in the area of well-being at work, the 2022 budget conclave approved measures to better ensure the protection of well-being and health at work. Among other things, there will be confidential adviser in all companies with more than 50 employees and specific legislation will be designed to prevent musculoskeletal disorders.

Belgium has set a goal of achieving an employment rate of 80% of people aged 20–64 by 2030. The employment rate of women remains lower than that of men. Women occupy more part-time jobs, receive lower wages for the same work, have fewer career opportunities, and still take on a large share of unpaid domestic labour. These inequalities are even more pronounced for women who are part of vulnerable groups such as those from immigrant backgrounds or with disabilities. The health crisis has exacerbated these inequalities. The federal government launched an initiative to strengthen gender equality in the world of work. At the federal level, a grant of 1.5 million euros for 2022–2023 was awarded to an ambitious project call Bread & Roses whose objective was to remove employment barriers and improve the quality of existing jobs, with a particular focus on low-skilled women, older women and women from immigrant backgrounds. The subsidized projects should be completed by June 2024.

The labour market was tight in 2022, with a record number of job openings being recorded⁵. In the battle against labour shortages, an inter-federal platform to promote the mobility of workers between regions was established in 2022, providing an ideal forum for discussing employment policies among the various governments involved. To support mobility, Wallonia has adopted a new language plan (Plan langues) with a budget of 2.750 million euros, which includes new vocationally oriented language training. The Flemish government joined forces with the Flemish social partners to address the structural challenges on the Flemish labour market. In July 2022, for example, an employment agreement (Iedereen nodig, iedereen mee) was concluded with four solutions to labour shortage and mismatch: (i) a results-oriented activation policy, (ii) a thorough training policy, (iii) workable work, and (iv) interregional mobility and economic migration. The Flemish government wants to turn the tightness into opportunities for non-professionals and job seekers. Also in light of the labour market shortage, the VDAB is committed to accelerating its

5 The vacancy rate is highest in the Flemish Region (5.51%), then in the Brussels-Capital Region (4.14%) and then in the Walloon Region (3.89%).

digital contact strategy. To widen the gap between non-work and work, the Flemish government introduced the job bonus. In Wallonia, specific actions for the construction sector are being developed (promotion campaign for construction professions, construction bonus, driving licence voucher). Training actions for digitization and cybersecurity and to meet competency needs in healthtechs are also being launched. Finally, in January 2023, the government of the Brussels-Capital Region approved a draft decree on economic migration that aims to bring together but also simplify the regional competence texts on work permits and self-employed permits, and to do so both for workers from outside Europe who wish to work in Belgium and for Brussels businesses that wish to hire them. To overcome skilled labour shortages, the German-speaking Community envisions creating alternative training opportunities and attracting new target groups to alternate learning. Finally, still aiming at a coordinated approach to specific problems in the labour market, the national employment conference 2022 focused on the integration of people of foreign origin in the labour market. In 2023, the conference will address women's employment.

The regions are also making efforts to improve job assistance. In the Brussels-Capital Region, an evaluation of all employment support measures is being finalized to make support for job seekers more effective. A regional strategy (Stratégie qualification emploi / Strategie inzake kwalificatie voor werk) will be launched in 2023 to raise the competence level of Brussels residents. In 2022, the Brussels-Capital Region also worked to remedy labour shortages and respond to the challenges posed by the mismatch between job seekers' skills and the needs of the labour market. To this end, emphasis was placed on training and improving job seekers' competencies, especially in languages and digital knowledge, in order to facilitate access to the labour market. Flanders is committed to a more inclusive labour market. Thus, an individual customised approach was launched that creates opportunities for persons with occupational disabilities and for businesses. As part of the measures to remedy the consequences of the energy crisis, the Walloon government adopted a resolution applying an additional indexation to the scheme of aid for the promotion of employment (Aides à la promotion de l'emploi – APE). The reform plans continue for the integration of persons removed from the labour market, which are part of the project seeking a single point of contact for recruitment (Vermittlung aus einer Hand) of the German-speaking Community. The reform is aimed at improving counselling and recruitment work, preventing revolving-door effects and getting people into work faster. At the same time, a modernization process is being initiated within the employment agency.

In order to better reach job seekers and non-professionals, the regions are also pushing for enhanced cooperation with local governments. Flanders is expanding the governing role of local authorities to work. Local authorities can provide more customized, broader activation policies and can respond to local distinctiveness. With this, 75% of the local authorities in Flanders have committed to working out actions with VDAB (and partners) that contribute to the 80% employment rate target. Therefore, the 2023 Flemish employment conference will cover local labour market policies. In Wallonia, a pilot project (Territoires zéro chômeur de longue durée) was introduced in certain municipalities as part of the European programme ESF+. The objective of this programme is to provide an employment contract to all persons who are long-term unemployed. Cities, municipalities, public centres for social welfare (CPAS) and also associations and companies with a social purpose will be able to develop projects that add value at the social level and mobilize actors to revive employment in their territories.

Wallonia, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation continue the implementation of the plan aimed at creating 5 200 reception places within four years (1 000 premiers jours). The objective is to remove barriers to employment and training, thus facilitating access to the labour market while promoting a better work-life balance. 700 jobs in shelter structures will be created immediately.

2.2. Education and training

a. Improve the performance of and inclusion in the education and training system

Reforms to improve quality and inclusion in education continue.

The Flemish government recently approved the setting up and operation of the private foundation Leerpunt. This foundation aims to strengthen teachers (teams) in improving teaching quality and remedying learning delays, by developing an independent, accessible and scientifically based knowledge database on what works in terms of didactic practice, taking into account various contexts and learning resources. This knowledge database will then be translated into Flemish classroom and school practice to support teachers in their daily classroom practice. Starting in the 2023-2024 school year, Flanders will introduce standardized, normalized and validated network and cross-domain tests (the Vlaamse toetsen) to support schools' internal quality assurance. This will help strengthen educational quality by monitoring learning outcomes and measuring learning gains.

In the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the systemic reform of compulsory education (Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence) that was initiated in 2015 continues, particularly in qualifying education and in terms of continuing teacher training.

In order to improve the material conditions of education and to strengthen the efforts of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in the responses to be made to the energy and climate challenges, and taking into account the work of the reform and the school building project (Chantier bâtiments scolaires), the government has released funds amounting to 1 billion euros through an exceptional investment plan in school buildings (Plan d'investissement exceptionnel dans les bâtiments scolaires), in both compulsory education and higher, non-university education. These investments are in line with the work of the reform and school construction project mentioned above, which aim to improve the material conditions of education and strengthen the efforts of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in the responses to be made to the energy and climate challenges. A draft decree on the matter will be adopted in early April 2023. Project calls will be launched for the various organising bodies in 2023 and 2024.

In the context of the health crisis, it appeared urgent to develop a strategy for the individual digital equipment for secondary, mainstream and specialized education pupils in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. The first part of the strategy was to allow schools to equip themselves with a stock of laptops or new or refurbished tablets to make available to pupils during the 2020-2021 school year. This component, now closed, made it possible to provide 23 760 computers to 532 schools, at a cost of 8.7 million euros.

The second component allows parents of secondary pupils to equip their child with a computer or tablet through a purchase or rental system. Originally, the premium was 75 euros per pupil. Since the 2022-2023 school year, the premium has doubled to 150 euros. An annual budget of 15 million euros is allocated to finance this measure that has made it possible to equip 10 222 secondary school pupils.

To strengthen inclusion in higher education, a large-scale communications campaign was launched in June 2022 to raise awareness and better inform about the resources available to higher education students.

A website was created where attention is drawn to the resources available, both at the Wallonia-Brussels Federation level and at the federal level, under three categories: financial assistance; support and guidance (including help to succeed and psychosocial assistance); and material

assistance. The implementation of the reform of the landscape decree (décret paysage) in 2022 also contributes to the inclusive nature of the education system by combating the prolongation of studies, by clarifying the pathway of French-speaking students and by strengthening the guidance to succeed. Funds devoted to this reform were increased in 2021 and most recently in December 2022.

The Flemish government is replacing the decree for pupils with specific educational needs in mainstream education (M Decree) with a new decree (decreet Leersteun). This decree develops a new model for supporting pupils with special educational needs in mainstream education (Leersteunmodel). The decree and the model will come into effect on 1 September 2023. Preparations for this will be made during the 2022–2023 school year.

A para-governmental institution for supportive pedagogy will be established in the German-speaking Community. This independent, pluralistic new institution of public law will be based on the model of the East-Belgian autonomous college (Autonome Hochschule (AHS) in the Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens) and Kaleido Ostbelgien. It will have to bring together all the knowledge on supportive pedagogy to use existing resources in an even more appropriate way for high-threshold support in mainstream schools for the benefit of pupils. Specifically, this means that the centre for supporting pedagogy (Zentrum für Förderpädagogik – ZFP) and all its sites will be transferred from community education (Gemeinschaftsunterrichtswesen – GUW) to this independent institution of the network. The freely subsidized education system (Freie Subventionierte Unterrichtswesen – FSU) will also transfer the specialized primary school Pater Damian to this institution.

This new institution will accommodate current integration teachers and trained staff. At the same time, mainstream schools will have more rights to be involved in decisions. They will enjoy more flexibility in using this specialized and support staff thanks to cooperative agreements. Thus, mainstream schools will still have only one central point of contact for the integration of pupils with special needs. Low-level support will remain the competence of mainstream schools.

In the short term, the German-speaking Community wishes to grant a scholarship to persons undergoing training in educational institutions in the German-speaking Community for professions in which there is a shortage of skilled labour, as well as for medical and dental students. These individuals will not have to repay the scholarship if they work in the German-speaking Community for at least five years over a 10-year period after their studies or training. The amount of the scholarship should be based on the current wages of students in apprenticeship systems. In a first phase, the scholarship system will target students pursuing training in higher education in the German-speaking Community, students doing alternate learning in the German-speaking Community, secondary pupils in the 7th year of secondary vocational education, and medical and dental students. In a second phase, the scholarship system may be expanded to students learning bottleneck occupations, including in the health sector. This is considered a very important measure, firstly to improve the equity of opportunity in training, and secondly to familiarize as many young people as possible with this region. A decree for the first phase should be submitted to Parliament before the summer.

b. Improve the quality and labour market relevance of vocational education and training

In order to improve the alignment between education and the labour market, a joint memo was adopted in spring 2022 by the governments of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region, structurally redrawing the provisions and landscape of qualifying education and vocational training and, in particular, alternate learning. The implementation of a cross-sectional roadmap will strengthen the role of higher education and social advancement education in alternate learning policies. Modular learning is being generalized into qualifying

education to effectively combat duplication and encourage lifelong learning. The occupational options creation system was thoroughly reformed in 2023 so that the diversity of schools' qualification options would match the immediate opportunities of the labour market or its competence needs in the medium term. This reform will take effect from 2024. Internship agreements were simplified as of 1 January 2023.

Because the workplace is also a strong learning environment in Flanders, the Flemish government is simplifying incentives for workplace learning. The new premium for alternate training (Leerlingenpremie voor alternerende opleidingen) encourages dual and alternate learning secondary school pupils to successfully complete their alternate training. Dual learning in formal adult education was introduced in Flanders in September 2022. In the new generation of sector covenants, sectors are committing to better alignment between education and the labour market, promotion of lifelong learning and effective competence policies. From 2023, there will also be a greater focus on (lateral) intake, advancement and retention, among other things.

From September 2023, a vocational orientation project will be introduced in German-speaking Community schools to create a closer link between classroom education and the world of work and to make better use of pupils' personal abilities. The project includes five lines of action that will be introduced, further developed and individually adapted to each other from the third cycle of primary school to the end of the school track.

Discovering occupations and businesses in the classroom, as well as individual observations and internships, will enable a realistic picture and a first contact with the world of work. At the same time, a portfolio (Europass) managed by the pupils themselves throughout secondary education will document their development and their acquisition of professional competencies. This self-reflection is carefully guided and supported by internal and external offerings from the 4th year of secondary school.

Flanders continues to implement the June 2021 STEM agenda. This aims to increase enrolment in STEM courses and careers, create more STEM specialists and lead to an overall strengthening of STEM competencies in wider society, which is known as STEM literacy. For its part, in December 2022 the Walloon government validated seven large-scale projects with a budget of 650 000 euros to promote the professions, sectors and competencies that offer employment including STEM and digitalization.

In the Brussels-Capital Region, a reform of paid educational leave is planned in 2023 to make it more efficient and transform it into a career-wide training tool that is also more inclusive (in terms of gender, disability, online training, etc.).

To respond to the structural changes in our society and to the digitalization of the educational system, hybrid teaching in social promotion education will be possible from now on in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Investment in digital knowledge and competencies will be planned to guide education actors in their techno-pedagogical use. To ensure that all students have equal opportunities for social empowerment through physical and distance learning, access to equipment and necessary content will also be provided.

c. Develop more flexible and attractive career paths and teacher training.

In December 2021, the Flemish government adopted a concept memo on the revaluation of the teaching profession, with a series of measures to make the profession more attractive in Flanders in the short and medium term and to address the teacher shortage. In Flanders, a series of short-term measures came into effect in the 2021–2022 school year, such as removing the financial threshold for lateral entrants, and other measures are planned for the 2023–2024 school year. On 10 March 2023, a preliminary draft decree implementing measures on teacher tenure was approved by the Flemish government. A number of measures (for example, the relaxation of the

training system (Leraar-in-opleiding)) are yet to be negotiated with the social partners. If there is sufficient support, the measures will be implemented.

At the end of 2022, the Flemish government appointed a commission of experts (Commissie van Wijzen) to create a blueprint for a modern personnel, professionalization and school organization policy within education, including the possibilities in the field of digitalization and dual learning. The intent is to attract and retain talent and encourage collaboration and differentiation among teachers and within teams.

In Francophone education, the reform of initial teacher training, adopted in 2021, will be implemented from the beginning of the 2023–2024 school year. As a reminder, this will better train future kindergarten and secondary teachers to practice their profession. The implementation of the reform will help improve the French-speaking education system.

The continuing education of teachers and the evolution of their professional careers will be stimulated by a better definition of training priorities, the identification of mandatory training topics and the increase of half-day training for beginning teachers. Moreover, a second set of measures to combat the teacher shortage was adopted in 2022, including an experimental replacement provision for absent teachers at the primary level. This pilot project of the local substitute pool (Pool local de remplacement) aims to provide more stability for beginning teachers and thus combat shortages during the school year. A second measure concerns the valorization in monetary seniority for teachers of a second language (German, English and Dutch, employed as of 28 August 2023), by recognizing services performed in private if the staff member can prove, by any legal means, that they have used the language taught during their previous professional experience.

2.3. Implementation of the NRRP

Under the NRRP, a number of digitization measures in education are planned. In Flanders (I-4.01), the Brussels-Capital Region (I-4.05), the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and the German-speaking Community (I-4.06), investment in digital equipment for schools is in full swing. As part of the NRRP, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is implementing the digital strategy for higher education, which allows for a strengthening of digital training and the recruitment of technical pedagogical experts who support educational institutions in their digital training plans. The measure of personalized guidance in compulsory education (I-4.03) in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation has already achieved its goal, while the reform against school dropout (R-4.03) is expected by the end of the year. At the labour market level, the federal reform (R-4.06) to combat discrimination was approved on 1 April 2022. Training budget reform also went into effect on 1 September 2022. Flanders' learning and career offensive (I-5.04) is well advanced: 365 660 people use this tool and the VDAB strategy has been approved. In the area of digital education, 62 digital learning projects were launched (I-5.06). Six contracts were signed in the Brussels-Capital Region for social innovation initiatives as part of the framework of the job seekers retraining strategy (I-4.07). In the Walloon Region, 148 files were selected for the financing of new infrastructures for young children for an equivalent of 1 838 places.

3. Entrepreneurship, competition, innovation and digitalization

3.1. Entrepreneurship and competition

To cope with sharply increased energy costs in 2021 and 2022, the respective governments have taken their measures. The federal government has taken temporary support measures for the most vulnerable companies. These include the possibility of deferred payment and an amicable repayment plan for social contributions, tax support, the extension of the right of bridging for the self-employed, easier payment of social contributions for the self-employed, and the introduction of temporary unemployment. The Flemish government, partly still in the context of the corona crisis and supporting a successful recovery, has developed a number of low-threshold instruments aimed at supporting the liquidity of affected companies. Flanders has provided a total of 250 million euros to compensate companies for increased energy costs. This aid was approved by the European Commission as part of the State Aid Temporary Framework. It is temporary, purposeful and conditional. In addition, at the beginning of 2023, the bridging loan was widened to all enterprises, and the government is allowed to borrow up to 2 million euros. Furthermore, instruments were put on the market to restore the solvency of companies (including through guarantees by the Participatiemaatschappij Vlaanderen (PMV), and the extension of the transformation fund to companies affected by the energy crisis). To support companies severely affected by the energy crisis, Wallonia adopted the following measures: direct aid to affected companies; support for the competitiveness of supplying the most electricity-intensive industrial plants; and repayment facilities, reduced-interest loans and specific guarantees. A budget of 505 million euros is provided for this purpose. Wallonia notified the EU of 300 million euros. For a total budgetary provision of 200 million euros, the Brussels government took temporary measures to support companies and the public and non-profit sectors, among others, in managing their energy costs (in terms of energy savings, financial support and accompanying measures to reduce costs).

More specifically for the retail sector, measures have also been taken in the regions. As part of the reform of the spatial development legislation (Code de développement territorial, CoDT), the Walloon government has decided to repeal the decree on commercial establishments. As a result, future commercial establishment permits will become urban planning permits. Measures have also been taken to support commercial development in city centres, and digitalization. In Flanders, merchants are being helped in digital transformation by the e-commerce action plan (Het internet: ook uw zaak). In addition, local retail policy will be supported with the development of a Smart Retail Dashboard with relevant policy data. The action plan *Werk aan de winkel* focuses on retail innovation. In the Brussels-Capital Region, support for local trade is promoted through project calls that promote good practices in sustainability and the collective dynamics of commercial districts. Programmes are introduced to support digitization with an emphasis on frugal, inclusive, democratic and ethical digital solutions, as well as support for the development of carbon-free logistics via cargo bikes for deliveries from retailers and artisans. Finally, the basic knowledge of business management will be abolished, as well as five regulated professions, which will facilitate access to entrepreneurship and the creation of commercial businesses.

In Brussels, the regional strategy for economic transition (Shifting Economy) – a project that is an integral part of the NRRP – mobilizes all economic actors in achieving a carbon-free, regenerative, circular, social, democratic and digital regional economy by 2050. This objective is concretized through the gradual reorientation, by 2030, of the various regional economic levers towards companies with exemplary environmental and social practices. By first increasing economic support to these companies (2024) and then reserving it only for them (2030), the region is encouraging enterprises to begin converting their activities now and strengthen their resilience in

the face of future shocks. This strategy includes many measures (224), both thematic and sectoral. In Wallonia, the merger of economic and financial instruments will be completed in January 2023, providing companies with a single point of contact.

3.2. Innovation

In 2021, Belgium spent 3.2% of its GDP on R&D (0.7 percentage points more than in 2016), which put it second in the EU rankings, behind Sweden. The private sector accounts for 2.4% and the public sector (education and government) 0.8%. In 2021, R&D personnel made up 2.3% of the labour force⁶. In 2020, the various tax cuts amounted to 2.3 billion euros. A recent study by the Federal Planning Bureau found that certain tax incentives do indeed have a positive effect on R&D intensity⁷.

In Belgium, more than 80% of total public funding for R&D and innovation (excluding tax credits) is managed by the communities and regions. In addition to tax relief opportunities, there are several direct support programmes for innovation, some of which are listed here as important. The federal government continues its support through several ongoing projects, including Digital Belgium, European High-Performance Computing (Euro-HPC) and the national institute for radio elements (Smart-IRE). Wallonia continues its smart specialization strategy (S3). The Walloon recovery plan (Plan de relance de la Wallonie – PRW) provides 58 million euros to support the 19 strategic initiatives selected as of 2023. Several calls for collaborative projects were launched in 2022 to help develop the strategic value chains (low-carbon industry, circular economy, space, defence). The government also decided to support strategic research through a new technological instrument (engineering sciences, chemistry and physics), aimed at promoting the emergence of revolutionary technologies for industrial applications with a view to a sustainable transition. A budget of 9.75 million euros per year is planned. Two projects are supported under IPCEI Hydrogen, and three projects are preselected in IPCEI Health. Within the framework of the Shifting Economy programme, on 26 January 2023 the Brussels government approved at first reading the amendment of the ordinances to promote research and innovation to include the criteria of social and environmental exemplification. 50 million euros in grants are reallocated annually to support the development of innovative projects in strategic Brussels areas such as climate, buildings, urban flows, health, social innovation and the digital domain. Innovation policy in Flanders is increasingly succeeding in reaching small(er) companies as well. In 2021, Flanders joined the group of innovation leaders for the first time based on Europe's Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS). Flanders has the ambition to become one of the top 5 innovative knowledge regions in Europe. Flanders is structurally further committed to – among other things – expanding its strategic research centres, and research and innovation related to sustainable hydrogen technologies. In addition, the Flanders Future Tech Fund (FFTF) was repositioned in 2022 to ensure that it can operate within an investment context with ESA neutrality. The FFTF has been reoriented to an 'early stage' financing fund (of 75 million euros).

In addition, some initiatives are underway in Flanders that facilitate innovation in other ways. Flanders Technology & Innovation is a project through which Flanders aims to showcase itself as a leading technology laboratory by addressing five essential societal challenges: climate and energy (energy tech), health (health tech), education and labour market (Flanders Next Academy), data and digitization (data tech) and entertainment and media (entertainment tech). Symposiums and, in March 2024, public events will be organized around these and among other themes. The

6 Detailed figures are available in the appendices of the regions.

7 Dumont, M. (2022), Public Support to Business Research and Development in Belgium - Fourth evaluation. FPB Report 12721, Federal Planning Bureau.

opening of the European Digital Innovation Hubs in early 2023 will strengthen digital innovation among Flemish SMEs.

3.3. Digitization

In the area of digitization, the federal government is focusing on SMEs and the self-employed. A 12 million euros RRF-funded digital resilience support programme consists of two main components. The first is a four-year awareness campaign aimed at informing SMEs about existing resources, especially for self-assessment, and encouraging them to strengthen their digital security. The second concerns five calls for projects, each with specific objectives, aimed at improving knowledge of risks and implementing organizational and technical measures, particularly through skills acquisition. Projects should be selected and started from February 2023. To support SMEs in launching e-commerce, an online tool will be developed that will allow companies to obtain advice tailored to their activity. A communication campaign will be conducted about the tool for business owners. One or more events to present and promote the tool are also being considered.

The RRF Stop Phishing project aims to detect and block phishing and fraud attempts via telecommunications networks thanks to the implementation of anti-fraud platforms among Belgian telecom operators. On 28 October 2022, the Council of Ministers approved the national convergence plan for the development of artificial intelligence (AI), with nine objectives to make Belgium a Smart AI Nation, based on a human-centred approach and with reliable AI. Given the clear relationship between income and use of an internet connection, as shown by research, the federal government also approved a reform of the social tariff electronic communications on its meeting of 28 October 2022. This reform will take effect from 2024.

Several initiatives have been taken by the regions and communities in the area of digitization of public administration. The German-speaking Community has established a digital portal for citizens that allows secure access to the community's services. In addition, the community wants to accelerate digitization in education. In 2022, the Flemish government ratified its data strategy (Vlaamse datastrategie) with four priority action domains related to data-driven work within the government. In 2023, the implementation of this data strategy will be further monitored through an update of the annual action plan containing actions of entities or policy areas that contribute to one or more priority focus areas of the data strategy. Also in 2022, the Flemish digital services strategy was given the green light. Its purpose is to provide uniform direction to regional and local governments in improving their digital services. The Brussels-Capital Region has launched a programme to support the digital transformation of regional authorities. This programme consists of several projects, including a new regional IT management, the Managed Workplace, a regional procurement office and a data platform, the latter being an integral part of the NRRP. The obligations arising from the European Single Digital Gateway regulation have also leveraged several initiatives, including IRISbox and Fidus. The IRISbox electronic counter allows citizens and businesses to complete more than 250 administrative procedures online. Through the Fidus platform, regional and local administrations can access personal data from authentic sources, in compliance with the GDPR and applying the Once Only principle. In Wallonia, a new platform of innovative digital services for citizens and businesses will be fully operational by 2024.

More generally, programmes for digitization among citizens and businesses are underway. The Brussels-Capital Region has created a unique digital environment (BEDSy) that allows efficient and real-time management of current economic policies, as well as analysis of their results and impacts. In the long run, it should be possible to measure administrative and regulatory burdens and follow the regional strategy Shifting Economy. The first tangible results are expected in 2024. One of the seven spearheads of the Flemish recovery plan (Vlaamse veerkracht) is to digitally transform Flanders, with the Flemish government wanting to make Flanders a leading data economy and society. As part of the same recovery plan, the Flemish government also

continues its commitment to e-inclusion, which involves both providing training on and access to computers and the internet. Wallonia continues to implement the Digital Wallonia strategy. Key elements include research and innovation (digital security knowledge centre and the A6K/E6K project), digital skills development, especially for NEETs (A6K/E6K project and Digital Wallonia For Education), support for businesses and start-ups (Digital Recovery support and the A6K/E6K project), and support for the deployment of the circular economy through digital means (Digital 4 Circular Wallonia). Moreover, Wallonia is preparing for the introduction of 5G. 15 million euros will be released for projects aimed at implementing proofs of concept (POC). By December 2022, 19 projects had already been selected. The goal is to test realistic and practical use cases. These tests will be conducted in such a way that technical, commercial, health, economic and even environmental hypotheses can be compared. Based on the recommendations of an expert group, the government revised the radiation standard and introduced a limit of 9.2 V/m – at 900 MHz – per operator and a cumulative limit of 18.4 V/m (applicable to all transmitter antennas of all operators at a single location). As part of a project supported by the RRF, the development of fibre optic networks on the territory of the German-speaking Community will be realized in the near future. Also, all secondary schools will be equipped with a fibre optic connection. Also under an RRF-funded project, 1 800 teachers will receive a digital terminal. Next, all secondary school students will receive terminals. To support digitization in the youth sector, the community is developing a comprehensive concept for the digitization of youth work.

Finally, from the federal level, several measures were bundled into a national broadband plan for fixed and mobile Internet (Plan national pour la large bande fixe et mobile / Nationaal breedbandplan voor vast en mobiel internet, 2022–2024) that supports maximum connectivity for 5G and superfast fixed internet through five strategic axes, which will continue to be implemented in 2023. The first goal of the broadband plan is to eliminate so-called white zones in fixed internet coverage where there is no access to a speed of 100 Mbps. Grants will be awarded in 2023 and 2024 to stimulate operators' investments and facilitate and accelerate the rollout of high-speed internet in those areas. The Broadband Competence Office (BCO), launched in September 2022, will oversee all competencies for broadband deployment from a single administration and guide the implementation of the EU Connectivity Toolbox, in particular to achieve simplifications in licensing processes and create harmonization between regions. Through the restart and transition plan, the federal government has taken measures that facilitate economic recovery and make the economy stronger. In that framework, 24 million euros were released to support 5G test environments that make the social and economic potential of 5G technology more concrete, in order to stimulate the sector to create innovative solutions and to further solidify the technological know-how in our country. The projects will be selected and started in 2023.

3.4. Implementation of the NRRP

The digitization of public administration is an important part of the NRRP. The requirements and design modalities necessary to implement ten of the twelve subprojects for digitizing the federal government have been established (I-2.05); for the two remaining subprojects, this will be done this year. In Flanders, all 18 administration digitization projects have been approved and contracts signed. The law establishing the health(care) data authority (Gezondheids(zorg)data-autoriteit, I-2.06) was approved on 9 March 2023. As for the introduction of 5G (R-2.03), the allocation of user rights for the frequencies 700 MHz and 3 600 MHz started on 1 September 2022, while the rights for the frequencies 2G and 3G started early this year. In the Brussels-Capital Region, the legislative procedure was completed on 17 February 2023, and the ordinance revising radiation standards entered into force on the first day of the month following its publication in the Belgian Official Gazette. The Walloon decree on the introduction of 5G in Wallonia was passed by the Walloon Parliament on 7 December 2022, and the reform of radiation standards in Flanders came into force on 31 July 2022.

In the area of innovation, all projects planned within the framework of strengthening R&D in Flanders (I-5.11) were approved and launched. Adjustments were also made to the measure (R-5.07) to broaden the innovation base and encourage more small businesses to innovate. In the Walloon Region, the A6K-E6K technology and training centre project continues with the definition of the themes of the project calls, the launch of a public contract for the development of a testing room, and the consolidation and information phase for the construction and renovation of buildings. Finally, in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the focus of the NRRP was on the energy renovation of infrastructure for the various sectors under the federation's jurisdiction (education, culture, sports). Projects are progressing on schedule.

4. Energy, mobility and sustainability

4.1. Energy

Through its investments and reforms, Belgium supports a socially just, affordable, and inclusive transition to climate neutrality, as well as security of supply, with a particular focus on employment, consumer purchasing power and business competitiveness, as well as the fight against energy poverty. The Russian invasion of Ukraine led to a sharp rise in energy prices all over Europe, including Belgium. To support the financial strength of families, the Belgian federal government adopted a package of measures until 31 March 2023: a social tariff for nearly 20% of the population and an exceptional preventive reinforcement of the social fund, a one-time cheque of 300 euros per home heated with fuel oil, propane or butane, and a reform of excise taxes on natural gas and electricity. In addition, during the period from November 2022 to March 2023, the federal government granted a basic gas package (135 euros per month) and electricity package (61 euros per month), and a premium (250 euros) was created for families who heat primarily with pellets. VAT on electricity and natural gas for non-business contracts was permanently reduced to 6%. In addition, excise taxes are being adjusted. This creates a mechanism whereby the federal burden on the energy bill remains stable and does not rise as prices rise. Moreover, excise taxes on basic energy consumption will automatically decrease in the event of large price increases. This allows intervention where and when it is needed.

The Flemish government also took additional measures in September 2022 to dampen the impact of rising wholesale prices on energy bills. For example, in 2023, 148 million euros of costs for green certificates will be compensated at the grid operators, taking a significant cost out of grid tariffs. The energy levy for residential domiciled customers was set at zero from 2023. The green power quota requirement for suppliers was also reduced from 21.5% to 18% and will decrease annually by 1 percentage point, providing additional electricity bill relief of 88 million euros in 2023 and 112 million euros in 2024. Finally, support for cogeneration was abolished from 2023 for new and substantially modified fossil-fuel plants. At cruising speed, this will reduce electricity bills by 170 million euros. At the end of 2022, a new impulse programme for energy transition was launched by the Flemish agency for innovation and entrepreneurship (Vlaams Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen – VLAIO) that focuses on accelerating energy transition and energy efficiency in companies.

The Walloon government has taken several measures to prevent energy poverty: the status of protected customer has been extended until August 2023, the procedures applicable in case of non-payment of electricity and gas have been modified, and a budget of 435 000 euros has been released to support actions for vulnerable consumers. In addition, 32.6 million euros of energy aid (Aides énergies) were released to support social and health structures, so they could cope with the increase in energy prices and ensure the continuity of their services. This support also covers

the mobility costs of the 17 000 home care workers. 450 euros per full-time equivalent will be released to support the mobility of workers in the 'service voucher' sector.

In response to the energy crisis, the Brussels-Capital Region continued its additional support to the public centres for social welfare (OCMW/CPAS) and extended access to protected client status for the most vulnerable families, allowing them to benefit from the *social tariff*, negotiate a longer payment plan with their supplier, suspend recovery procedures and be protected from a possible disconnection.

On 23 September 2022, Belgium became the second EU member state to fill its gas reserves to 100%. The federal government included additional measures in its plan for the winter (Plan hiver / Winterplan) to secure short-term gas supplies, organized several awareness campaigns, and began to play an exemplary role itself, e.g. by only heating government buildings to 19°C. The capacity compensation mechanism to ensure security of supply will be further operationalized with the preparation of the upcoming auctions. The federal government has approved a preliminary draft law to extend the lifetime of the Doel 4 and Tihange 3 nuclear reactors by 10 years. An agreement in principle was reached between the federal government and Engie on the modalities of the approach. Belgium considers it a priority to maintain its nuclear knowledge and expertise, with support from its leading nuclear institutions such as SCK CEN and the IRE. The federal government is prioritising the acceleration of the renewable energy transition, making Belgium less dependent on fossil fuel imports. Bringing offshore wind farms to 8 GW capacity, with the first-ever energy island and new interconnections, three new wind farms in the North Sea and the repowering of the oldest zone will turn the North Sea into a major green power plant. The federal government selected 20 innovative projects under the energy transition fund (Fonds de transition énergétique / Energietransitiefonds). To increase solar energy production, the federal government has temporarily reduced the VAT on solar panels, heat pumps and boilers for new homes to 6% (2022–2023). To accelerate the energy transition, a tax reform of the renewable investment deduction will be implemented.

The Walloon government adopted a new PAX EOLIENICA to meet the needs of the sector while taking into account the municipalities and residents and preserving biodiversity. The sector's 2030 production target is increased, and developers are required to open their projects to citizen and municipal participation, up to 25% for each. The Walloon government has adopted a decree on thermal energy that clarifies the legal framework. Through a project call, 33 projects were selected that are expected to produce 45.5 GWh of heat annually, preventing 10 000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. To support the energy transition of Walloon SMEs, several measures will be implemented with the support of the ERDF and the Just Transition Fund.

The Flemish government recently launched a new support measure called GREEN investment support, aimed at companies investing in more efficient energy consumption (adjustments to the production process) and greener energy consumption (transition from fossil fuels to green energy). Furthermore, Flanders is accelerating its efforts to roll out Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS), and in doing so, is deploying seven leverage actions. Voluntary energy policy agreements (Energiebeleidsovereenkomsten – EBO) between the Flemish Region and participating energy-intensive companies have been extended for the period 2023–2026. The level of ambition of the new EBOs was raised. The target group of EBOs was broadened to include all energy-intensive enterprises. In addition, the definition of cost-effective measures was tightened. The EBOs were simultaneously broadened to include a climate component, among other things. Also, from 1 January 2023, a strengthened regulatory framework was introduced for non-energy-intensive businesses, to also require this target group to implement energy efficiency improvement measures. Flanking this strengthened legislation, the post-audit premium has been reformed and strengthened and provision has been made for sector-federation agreements (Sectorfederatie-overeenkomsten – SFO). In addition, a solar panel requirement was introduced for rooftops of large electricity consumers with an offtake of more than 1 GWh and buildings of public bodies

with offtake of more than 250 MWh. They will be required to install solar panels on a minimum portion of their roofs by 2025.

The Flemish government decided to temporarily and wherever possible turn off public lighting on regional roads between 11 pm and 6 am, to set the temperature in Flemish government buildings at a maximum of 19°C, and to launch an information campaign to encourage citizens to renovate to improve their homes' energy efficiency (Mijn VerbouwPremie). To protect households from rising energy prices, the Flemish government has extended the period during which grid operators are prohibited from disconnecting households from energy supplies. OCMW energy desks were also strengthened to prevent the accumulation of energy debts and accelerate debt reduction. Since 1 October 2022, the Flemish government has also frozen rents on the most energy-hungry homes (energy performance certificate (Energieprestatiecertificaat – EPC) labels E and F). This measure is valid for one year.

The German-speaking Community has reformed energy subsidies. The new energy bonus scheme, supported by the RRF, is tailored to local needs, and aims to create non-bureaucratic incentives for increasing energy efficiency and the renovation of residential buildings, thus contributing to the achievement of European energy policy goals by 2050. The energy efficiency improvement measures of associations and municipalities under the infrastructure plan are now 80% subsidized, up from 60% previously. 30 million euros are planned for the renovation all public housing to make it more energy efficient.

Within the framework of the strategy for hydrogen (Stratégie hydrogène / Waterstofstrategie) – which aims to make Belgium a hub for the import and transit of green hydrogen, thus decarbonizing heavy industry – the federal and Flemish governments are supporting the development of a climate-neutral steel production plant using green hydrogen. The federal government is providing 6 million euros in support. Flanders has already allocated 11.8 million euros at this time. On 14 October 2022, the federal government approved an update to this strategy. The federal government also approved a preliminary draft law aimed at increasing investment security for interested market players. Further, the federal government launched a project call for the development of hydrogen transportation infrastructure. The Flemish government approved its hydrogen vision on 13 November 2020, and through research and innovation provides the necessary support for the production and use of sustainable hydrogen technologies and the implementation of its hydrogen vision. At the same time, the Flemish government is working on a framework decree for networks and guarantees of origin for supplying hydrogen to consumers. In Wallonia, the construction of hydrogen production facilities will be supported by the Just Transition Fund.

The three regions are strongly committed to energy renovation. In this context, the Walloon government has set up several projects, including the Alliance climat emploi rénovation (ACER), with the aim of creating a participatory dynamic to jointly stimulate the demand for renovation and the supply of companies. The Walloon government is also introducing a building passport (Passeport bâtiment). This computer tool, intended for citizens, collects and centralizes all available information about a building – in energy, technical and administrative terms – in a structured manner. The Walloon government has also reformed the regulation around and support for energy renovation of housing, public buildings and non-residential buildings. Significant budgets have been released to support investment in energy conservation and renovation of homes and public buildings through various mechanisms, including at the local government level. As of 1 January 2023, a renovation obligation will apply in Flanders for homes transferred in full ownership, in addition to the renovation obligation for non-residential buildings, which will apply as of 1 January 2022. All homes covered by the obligation will have to be renovated to EPC label D as a minimum within 5 years. Energy loans have been reformed and expanded into a new kind of loan (Mijn VerbouwLening – MVL), which offers a significant interest rate advantage over the legal interest rate. Through the MVL, a higher maximum amount can be borrowed (up to 60 000 euros), for a longer maximum term (up to 25 years) for a larger target group. During 2023, the support

and guidance offerings will be reformed to create strengthened, integrated and centralized guidance (Mijn VerbouwBegeleiding). On 10 December 2021, the Flemish government approved a vision note on energy poverty (Energiearmoedeplan 2025). This plan has an even stronger focus on preventive measures that ensure energy efficiency improvements in homes as a structural measure to prevent energy poverty.

The government of the Brussels-Capital Region has expanded and reformed the Renovation premium scheme by increasing certain interventions (roof insulation, heat pumps, etc.), by eliminating premiums for gas installations (boilers, water heaters, etc.), and by providing more support to the lowest-income households. In 2022, 14 800 grants totalling 32.6 million euros were awarded to renovate buildings in Brussels. To provide easier access to financing, the ECORENO loan was launched on 1 August 2022, allowing individuals to obtain preferential rate loans to renovate their homes. In 2022, 566 ECORENO credit applications were submitted for a total of 15.9 million euros. Finally, support for those seeking energy renovations has been strengthened. The government of the Brussels-Capital Region has adopted the preliminary draft ordinance containing the Brussels air, climate and energy control code. Among other things, this project aims to introduce, over the long term, a system of mandatory renovation of buildings in Brussels, and facilitate measures to decarbonize buildings.

As for managing the energy crisis, the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation has decided to release additional budgetary resources for the sectors for which it is competent. In response to rising energy costs, support mechanisms have been effectively implemented. In the higher education sector, for example, these mechanisms could include direct energy support for all higher education institutions and support in the form of a refundable cash advance or a subsidy for energy monitoring mechanisms, provided a number of conditions are met.

4.2. Mobility

In May 2022, the federal Council of Ministers approved a strategic note for the railways (Vision rail / Spoorvisie 2040). With this document, the federal government is setting a clear, ambitious and motivating pathway so that coherent and informed decisions can be made for rail policy for the next 20 years. The continuous improvement of efficiency and service to customers, both travellers and businesses, is central to this approach. As an extension of the note, the federal Council of Ministers approved a rail freight action plan (Plan marchandises / Actieplan goederenvervoer) on 30 September 2022. This plan will provide a concrete response to industry expectations expressed through the Rail Roadmap 2030. Through numerous exchanges with logistics players, the attractiveness of rail over other modes of transport will be improved. At the end of 2022, the federal Council of Ministers approved the public service contract of railway company SNCB/NMBS as well as the performance contract of infrastructure manager Infrabel. Both contracts are aligned and designed to implement the first steps of the 2040 vision for domestic passenger transportation. The government chose to award the public service contract directly to SNCB/NMBS for a period of 10 years, as allowed by the European regulations around rail liberalization. The contract starts from the needs and expectations of passengers and relies on a solid investment plan with guaranteed financing. Twelve measurable performance indicators were established, including punctuality rate, with a financial reward/penalty (bonus/malus) mechanism attached to some of them. This, together with the Mid Term Review, ensures that the annual performance of the public corporation can be effectively evaluated. The goals are clear: they include 10% more train supply, 40% more connections, 30% more passengers, 40% more bicycle parking, and a 50% fleet renewal. This represents an investment of around 9 billion euros over the entire 10-year period. 16.4 billion euros will go to Infrabel in the period 2023–2032 to improve the performance of the rail network, so more trains can be ran and more goods can be transported by rail, to achieve the federal government's ambitious target.

The regions want to promote the use and supply of soft and public transportation modes, among other things, through the further rollout of transportation hubs, i.e. places where different transportation modes are united to facilitate interconnection. In Flanders these are called Hoppinpunten, in Wallonia they are called Mobipôles, and in Brussels no definitive naming has been confirmed yet but pilot projects are underway. In 2022, Flanders launched a first pilot project for the Hoppincentrale – a central point for public transport that controls carriers and acts as an interface for travellers. This will be further rolled out in 2023. Furthermore, the regions are committed to investing in bicycle infrastructure. In Wallonia, the decree on bicycle policy (Politique cyclable) was approved on 23 November 2022. It provides a structured approach to Walloon cycling policy. Among other things, there will be major bicycle corridors along regional road N275 and highway E411. This will create an uninterrupted bicycle route connecting Wallonia and Brussels. Work to this end should be completed by 2025. The Brussels-Capital Region also continues to invest in public transport and infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians – the redevelopment of public spaces for the benefit of active users continues apace, including the development of a network of bicycle highways and bicycle parking facilities. A new metro line is under construction, a bus plan with the end result of 30% additional capacity is in the final stages of implementation, and a tram plan was recently approved that will provide eight new tram lines. The introduction of the general speed limit of 30 kilometres per hour has improved the understanding between different groups of road users. In addition to the plan to make 50 neighbourhoods traffic-free by 2030 and the many measures around shared mobility, there is also a strong commitment to electrification: at the beginning of 2023, 2 500 charging points were accessible to the public. By 2035, this will be 22 000. In Flanders, the investments in cycling infrastructure are framed within the new cycling ambition for Flanders of March 2023, which aims to create a cycling reflex: for every short to medium trip, cycling should be a spontaneous transportation choice. The new cycling ambition for Flanders confirms the position of cycling as an important mode of transportation, not only for the «first mile» and «last mile», but also for longer trips, thanks to the rise of electric bikes. Furthermore, in 2022, the Flemish government continued to invest unabated in the transition to a green and sustainable transport sector, including investments in water-bound transport projects and electrification of the Flemish transport company's (Vlaamse Vervoermaatschappij – VVM) bus fleet. As for public transport, basic accessibility is being further rolled out in Flanders. In Wallonia, an annual subscription is virtually free for certain groups: since September 2022, young people and the older people pay just 12 euros.

Furthermore, the Walloon government reached an agreement on a 5.5 million euro subsidy for the port of Liège, which is part of the extension of the Trilogiport multimodal platform. Because of its location, the port is a central hub between rail and road transportation. Work will begin in 2023–2024 to raise four downstream bridges, which will allow ships to load an additional row of containers. The maritime sector is of such importance to our country that maritime infrastructures must be properly secured. On 1 January 2023, an amended law for this purpose took effect, including against terror threats, illegal smuggling, foreign interference, economic espionage and cybercrime. There will be a maritime security unit (Cellule Sûreté maritime / Cel Maritieme Beveiliging) at the federal level to ensure enforcement of the law. In addition, the national maritime security authority (ANSM/NAMB) is responsible for approving security plans. Cooperation between three Federal Public Services (FPS) – Mobility, Defence and Home Affairs – with customs and other partners is the focus of this authority.

4.3. Sustainability

Governments are preparing the draft National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) to be delivered to the European Commission by 30 June 2023. The Walloon government has approved its plan (Plan air-climat-énergie (PACE) 2030). This update constitutes the roadmap for Wallonia to achieve a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2030. It includes about 250 actions aimed at the massive renovation of buildings, the development of renewable energy and

the conversion of mobility. The government of the Brussels-Capital Region also approved the draft of its new regional air, climate and energy plan (Lucht-, klimaat- en energieplan (LKEP) / Plan air-climat-énergie (PACE)), aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 47% in 2030 compared to 2005 (compared to 40% today), in line with the European Fit for 55 package and its ESA component for Belgium. In Flanders, the Flemish energy and climate plan (Vlaams energie- en klimaatplan – VEKP) 2021–2030 was given final approval on 9 December 2019. The VEKP includes goals and ambitions in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing energy efficiency and increasing renewable energy production. Progress is monitored annually in the VEKP progress report. In the spring of 2023, the VEKP will be updated in view of the draft update of the NECP. The federal government committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% compared to 1990, in line with the European target. The federal government has adopted a climate governance system that ensures the involvement of all federal administrations in climate policy. The system ensures regular monitoring of policies implemented and transparency to parliament and the general public. Various federal administrations have collectively prepared a total of 39 roadmaps detailing planned policies and measures, and with details for their implementation. The government of the German-speaking Community is sticking to the goals of its climate and energy plan, namely a 55% reduction in community CO₂ emissions by 2030 and 100% by 2050. To achieve this, 181.5 million euros were released for the implementation of energy and climate projects.

The Flemish government has expressed its ambition to be a leader in Europe on circular economy by 2030. Last year, several action plans were launched in Flanders, such as a policy programme on circular construction (Op weg naar circulair bouwen), a plan for local materials management (Uitvoeringsplan voor lokaal materialenbeheer) and the Green Deal with the distribution sector to reduce disposable packaging. The implementation of the Circular Wallonia strategy continued, with project calls to support R&D and innovation, the deployment of digital technology for the low-carbon and circular transition, the development of industrial symbiosis practices, «circular design», the development of circular practices in SMEs, sustainable construction, and specific actions for priority value chains. The federal action plan on the circular economy (Plan d'action fédéral pour une économie circulaire (PFEC) / Federaal actieplan circulaire economie (FACE)) is being further implemented in 2022 and 2023. One of the actions was the Belgium Builds Back Circular project, where funds from the RRF, after an initial call for projects, have funded twelve circular design projects in the following sectors: circular bicycles, wind energy, healthcare and biomimicry. A second call for projects will be launched in March 2023 on ecodesign for machinery and electronics, clothing, interior design and low packaging food chains, as well as for the substitution of substances of very high concern such as PFAS and endocrine disruptors. Another measure from PFEC/FACE concerns the creation of an incentive framework for product recovery. After coordination with the European Commission, there is a draft law on this subject that provides for a recovery index for eight product categories as well as a knowledge platform for the recovery sector. Legislation to phase out a first set of disposable plastics, while promoting reusable cups, went into effect in January 2022. During 2022, in the implementation of PFEC/FACE, a proposal to ban a second set of single-use plastic products was developed.

Like several regional initiatives (Good Food, Good Move, Renolution, Regional innovation plan, etc.), the regional programme for the circular economy (Gewestelijk programma voor circulaire economie (GPCE) / Programme régional d'économie circulaire (PREC)) – approved on 31 March 2022 – was integrated into the Brussels-Capital Region's strategy for economic transition (Shifting Economy). Bringing the different plans together into a common strategy allows for better coordination between the different competent authorities, resulting in the mutual reinforcement of each plan.

In its general policy statement (Déclaration de politique communautaire) 2019–2024, the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation committed itself, through a global and coordinated strategy, to make a substantial contribution to efforts to rethink living and consumption patterns

and to integrate the climate emergency into the heart of its action. To this end, on the initiative of the prime minister, a decree was approved on 1 July 2021 that organizes the coordination and strengthening of the actions of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation for an ecological transition. The decree sets clear and ambitious goals: carbon neutrality by 2050, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 compared to 1990, and a commitment to behavioural adaptation measures related to the green transition and biodiversity conservation.

On 16 September 2021, the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation adopted a cross-sectional ecological transition plan (Plan transversal de transition écologique – PTE) for the Wallonia-Brussels Federation to contribute to these global objectives. This plan is based on the synthesis of the contributions of civil society, sectors and authorities of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. It is based on six priorities: mobility; real estate infrastructure; public markets; behavioural adaptation; training, information and awareness; and cross-sectional actions.

4.4. Implementation of the NRRP

The focus of the NRRP remains the transition to a low-carbon society. This will be strengthened as part of the REPowerEU proposal. Regarding the development of renewable energy sources, the federal government's Backbone for H₂ & CO₂ investment plan (I-1.14) has been delayed due to the appeal process regarding the grant award under the IPCEI. At the same time, several projects focused on an industrial value chain for the transition to hydrogen (I-1.15, I-1.16, I-1.17) were selected at the federal level, in the Walloon Region and in Flanders. In the Walloon Region, seven decarbonization projects (I-1.18) have been selected and notified. FEED and environmental studies for the construction of the offshore energy island (I-1.21) have been completed and the permit application has been submitted. Renovation programmes in the various entities are running at full speed. In Flanders, the processing and disbursement of 46 154 one-time subsidy applications, for a total of 61 593 investments, is underway. In addition, 9 573 subsidies for home batteries were disbursed totalling 20 050 000 euros (I-1.01). In the Brussels-Capital Region (R-1.02), the ordinances on housing and energy came into force on 31 March 2022. In Wallonia, the reform of the energetic renovation of buildings (Rénovation énergétique des bâtiments – UREBA) was published in the Belgian Official Gazette (I-1.06) on 28 October 2022. In the area of sustainable mobility, the two rail infrastructure projects (I-3.09 and I-3.10) continue to progress well with the commissioning of 11 new stations and 54 yards on the lines to be completed by the third quarter of 2023. Targets for bicycle infrastructure will be met in the coming months (I-3.A), while the milestone for electric vehicle charging points in Flanders has been reached. Public transport projects in the Walloon Region (extension of the metro in Charleroi and the tram in Liège) and in the Brussels-Capital Region (high-service level bus) have been completed or are about to be completed, while the Smart Move application is being rolled out in Brussels (I-3.15).

5. Social protection and inclusion

5.1. Evolution of the situation

In Belgium, the risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) has decreased in line with the EU 2030 target. This indicator dropped from 20% in 2019 to 18.7% in 2022⁸. This recent decline in the AROPE is mainly due to a decrease in the poverty risk (AROP) and the proportion of low work intensity households (QJH). The AROP decreased from 14.8% in 2019 to 13.2% in 2022 and the QJH indicator decreased from 12.8% in 2019 to 11.5% in 2022. Recent figures for 2022 show a slight decrease in the third sub-indicator on which the AROPE is based, which is severe material

8 Regional figures are available at [Statbel](#).

and social deprivation (SMSD), to 5.8% of the Belgian population. Support measures taken during the Covid-19 pandemic prevented or even reduced an increase in poverty. This does not mean that living conditions have improved to the same extent for everyone. The most vulnerable groups in 2022 remained the same as in previous years: the unemployed, people from immigrant backgrounds, single parents, renters and the low-skilled.

5.2. General measures at the federal level

Measures have been taken by the various Belgian governments. At the federal level, several important measures were taken last year in the area of social security and social assistance.

The increase in minimum benefits towards the poverty line, a key goal of the coalition agreement, will continue in 2023. The income guarantee for older people, the minimum benefit and the income replacement allowance for the disabled were increased by 2.6% from 1 January 2023. On the same date, minimum pensions for the self-employed and employees were increased by 2.65% for the third time during this legislature.

Administrative simplification and the fight against the non-uptake of social assistance are also priorities, especially regarding the activities of the public centres for social welfare (CPAS/OCMW). Thanks to the CPAS/OCMWs' online project, anyone can apply online for social assistance from an authorized CPAS/OCMW without having to physically go to a CPAS/OCMW. Under the PrimaVera project, a computer tool for simulating the amount of the minimum benefit based on the calculation of the applicant's resources will be introduced. A circular letter to be proposed in the first half of 2023 will specify the procedure for obtaining a reference address for homeless people. Funding has been granted to five CPAS/OCMWs to combat non-uptake through proactive identification of rights holders, in order to enable better access to social rights, particularly by collecting data from various databases, but also by ensuring physical front-line social support. Similar initiatives are being taken for disability benefits. The disability assessment procedure will be reformed to introduce a multidisciplinary assessment and potential beneficiaries will be better guided to avoid non-uptake. A simulation tool was proposed in June 2022 to more quickly identify potential beneficiaries. In March 2023, an online BELMOD calculation tool was launched, which allows people with disabilities and long-term incapacitated workers to estimate the impact that earned income could have on their benefits.

The federal government has decided to make it easier for CPAS/OCMWs to estimate the income and especially the individual needs of families against a so-called reference budget. In addition to providing an evaluation tool free of charge, additional resources will be made available that will allow participating CPAS/OCMWs to grant additional financial assistance if needed. This pilot project will run for two years, 2023 and 2024.

Starting in 2023, incapacitated workers will receive minimum benefits from the first day of the third month of primary disability.

As of 1 January 2023, the bridging entitlement, which allows struggling self-employed workers to claim financial benefits and preserve rights to health care and disability benefits, has changed. The entitlement can now be combined with another replacement income and/or a professional activity within certain limits, and the basic package of the bridging entitlement (twelve months of financial benefits and four quarters of preservation of certain social rights) can be extended. Several measures have also been taken to reduce the social contributions of self-employed workers at the beginning of their careers and to extend certain leaves. Starting in 2023, the conditions for granting a minimum pension to people who work for their self-employed spouse will be relaxed and the ceiling of permissible activity will be increased for those who only receive a survivor's pension and have one or more dependent children.

The federal government also agreed to distribute 100% of the welfare budget (law of 27 December 2005) for 2023 and 2024 to adjust benefit amounts to the rising cost of living.

5.3. Specific measures

Poverty plans are being implemented at all levels of government. Adopted in July 2022 (after a participatory drafting process), the federal plan against poverty and inequality (Plan fédéral de lutte contre la pauvreté et les inégalités / Federaal plan tegen armoede en ongelijkheid) contains 141 measures that will be implemented by each of the relevant governments. A bill will soon be submitted to Parliament to legislate the systematic adoption of a poverty reduction plan in each new legislature. The Flemish action plan to combat poverty (Vlaams actieplan armoedebestrijding – VAPA) was approved in October 2022 and also takes into account the context of the energy crisis. To provide a structural response to energy poverty, the vision memo on energy poverty (Energiearmoedeplan 2025) was approved in Flanders in 2021, with a focus on preventive actions that increase the energy efficiency of homes and thus lead to lower energy bills. For this purpose, a combination of financial and de-risking instruments is used. The Wallonia-Brussels Federation launches calls for projects every year as part of its plan to combat poverty and reduce social inequalities (budget of 650 000 euros) and has appointed two supporting points for a period of five years to organize, coordinate and financially support projects and recognized associations working in the sector. The Walloon government completed a call for projects in January 2023 to support the implementation of local actions to abolish poverty and support people in precarious situations (maximum budget of 300 000 euros per project). The Brussels-Capital Region has drawn up an integrated Brussels social and health plan (Brussels Takes Care) with all the relevant stakeholders, which involves a territorial approach to social action and health, giving OCMW/CPASs a key role in implementing policies to combat inequality and poverty. The government of the German-speaking Community has decided to increase investment in social institutions by 30% over the original 2022 budget. Moreover, efforts in the fight against poverty and social exclusion will be redoubled (including by indexing benefits and increasing subsidies to social institutions).

The fight against child poverty also remains a priority for all Belgian authorities. In May 2022, Belgium submitted its national action plan for the implementation of the European Child Guarantee to the European Commission. This plan is the result of collaboration between all levels of government responsible for children's rights and poverty reduction, as well as with civil society actors active in these areas. At the federal level, two grants (1.2 million euros and more than 1 million euros) were awarded through the Child Poverty Project under the Child Guarantee to support the implementation of more than 25 projects (on nutrition, housing, health and education) by OCMW/CPASs in 2022 and 2023. Calls for projects to combat child poverty should also be launched in 2023 in partnership with the national lottery. Flanders wants to use VAPA, among other things, to contribute to the realization of the 2030 EU objectives on the fight against poverty and social exclusion, and in particular the fight against child poverty. To strengthen the fight against child poverty, the Flemish government is working to link all actors active at the regional and local levels to find answers to concrete problems, such as empty lunchboxes, materials at school, parental support, homework assistance, language support and leisure activities. In 2023 and 2024, 4.4 million euros will be released to strengthen the fight against child poverty at the local level. The projects (Samen op straat) undertaken with the non-profit organisation SAAMO, aim to work with young people in densely populated neighbourhoods and urbanized municipalities to mobilize their talents for their neighbourhoods. In the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the 2021–2025 management contract of the office for birth and childhood (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance – ONE) focuses on fighting child poverty, with additional resources of more than 60 million euros to be invested by 2024. The system of parental financial participation in childcare is being reformed to be fairer and ensure accessibility for people on low and middle incomes. Since 1 January, childcare fees for single-parent families have been reduced by 70%. An exemption to payment was also introduced for beneficiaries of heightened intervention (Bénéficiaires de

l'intervention majorée – BIM). The government should pass a decree this year to continue the pilot projects implemented since 2018 around the theme of free meals for preschool and primary school pupils in the most disadvantaged schools (under differentiated guidance), based on a budget of more than 20 million euros per year. A cross-sectional Brussels plan to support single-parent families was also adopted to provide a coordinated, effective and innovative response to the needs of these families, in particular single women with children.

In the area of housing, several actions have been taken at the regional level. The Flemish government has decided to strengthen the Flemish housing credit for families and singles with limited income and increase the budget. The Flemish government is also providing better support to local governments (Plan samenleven). The Walloon government approved the draft decree on the granting of a rent allowance and an energy allowance to certain applicants when a public housing company allocates a social housing unit. This rent allowance, set at 125 euros per month (with an increase for dependent children), is intended for the most precarious prospective tenants. Wallonia is also investing in the creation of social housing with high energy performance. In the Brussels-Capital Region, rent indexation is subject to a temporary framework designed to support tenants struggling with the energy crisis and fully in line with the programme to accelerate the renovation of Brussels' building stock. The percentage of rent indexation will vary according to the energy performance of the property in question. The Brussels government has also expanded homeless shelters.

There are also new initiatives to combat homelessness. At the federal level, a support grant was launched (2.145 million euros for 2022–2023) for the Housing First project to expand the number of counselling programmes for the homeless, with a focus on the needs of youth and women. Beginning in the first half of 2023, an investment grant of 10 million euros will also be made available to OCMW/CPASs most affected by homelessness for the structural expansion of housing for young homeless people. At the Walloon level, the government approved the creation of a homeless monitoring centre (Observatoire wallon de Sans-Abrisme – OWSA) with a budget of 25 million euros. The goal is to improve public policy based on quantitative and qualitative data. 30 million euros have also been released for the creation and renovation of 901 shelters or housing places for persons in great difficulty.

In the context of the conflict in Ukraine, the authorities of the different levels of government, within the framework of their respective competences, have worked continuously, in cooperation with the asylum and migration services, to ensure proper reception and the necessary psychosocial support for Ukrainians during their first months of settlement in Belgium. From 10 March 2022 to 31 January 2023, more than 65 000 certificates of temporary protection were issued to Ukrainian nationals. Wallonia, Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region have mobilized their resources to provide longer-term shelter for those who need it, working with Fedasil to spread the shelter on our territory, and with local authorities, among others, to find suitable housing. The Flemish government created a task force on Ukraine (Vlaamse Taskforce Oekraïne) to coordinate the integration of refugees with a specific emergency fund. The Walloon government has developed a strategy to mobilize the supply of private and public housing. A budget of 3.57 million euros has been released to support local governments. The government of the Brussels-Capital Region created the Brussels Helps Ukraine programme to strengthen the regional integration capacity of beneficiaries of temporary protection, with a budget of 100 million euros. In addition to the issue of housing, the federated entities took numerous measures to meet the needs of Ukrainian nationals in the areas of health care, psychosocial support, childcare, employment and training. On the federal side, additional funds have been made available to enable the CPAS/OCMWs that assist this vulnerable population to do quality work.

5.4. Implementation of the NRRP

In the NRRP, social cohesion is the subject of measures integrated into Axis 4. In addition to the education and digital inclusion measures already discussed in other sections, it should be noted that the Walloon government has validated 50 projects totalling 801 housing units for vulnerable people (I-4.12) and 148 applications have been selected to create 1 838 childcare spaces in the Walloon Region (I-4.13).

Progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals

1. Governance to achieve sustainable development goals

Since 2007, sustainable development has been enshrined in the Belgian Constitution. Article 7bis states: "In the exercise of their respective powers, the Federal State, Communities and Regions shall pursue the objectives of sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental aspects, taking into account intergenerational solidarity." Thus, each level of government should contribute to sustainable development. Consultation and cooperation among federated entities on sustainable development happens within the interministerial conference on sustainable development (Interministeriële Conferentie Duurzame Ontwikkeling (IMCDO) / Conférence interministérielle sur le développement durable (CIMDD)) established by the governments' consultation committee (Overlegcomité / Comité de concertation) on 6 June 2012. Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is measured by indicators. At the national level, they are published by the interfederal institute of statistics (Interfederaal Instituut voor de Statistiek / Institut interfédéral de Statistique – IIS) and the Federal Planning Bureau (see §4.2). The federated entities are developing their own follow-up system, e.g. *Vizier 2030* in Flanders⁹.

On 5 May 2022, the IMCDO/CIMDD decided to prepare a second Voluntary National Review (VNR) to be submitted to the United Nations (UN) at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2023. The various entities of the country together prepare this Voluntary National Review.

At the federal level, the 1997 Act on Coordination of Federal Policies for Sustainable Development aims to implement sustainable development goals through a strategy with a five-year cycle. The interdepartmental commission on sustainable development (Commission Interdépartementale pour le Développement Durable (CIDD) / Interdepartementale Commissie Duurzame Ontwikkeling (ICDO)) coordinates the actions of federal government departments. In October 2021, the government adopted a new federal plan for sustainable development (Plan fédéral

9 <https://www.vlaanderen.be/uw-overheid/beleid/het-vlaamse-beleid-voor-duurzame-ontwikkeling/vlaamse-strategie-duurzame-ontwikkeling/over-vizier-2030>

pour le développement durable / Federaal plan voor duurzame ontwikkeling), which focuses on interdepartmental measures and contributes to policy integration.

Flanders has strong governance regarding the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, which starts from the fourth *Flemish sustainable development strategy (Vlaamse Strategie Duurzame Ontwikkeling - VSDO4)* of November 2021. This fourth strategy follows the decree on sustainable development of 18 July 2008, which aims to ensure the continuity of policies around that theme. With this strategy, the Flemish government is pushing further towards a sustainable society with Visie 2050 as its long-term compass and Vizier 2030 as its focus. Follow-up indicators are also proposed for Vizier 2030. The Flemish government is committed to an approach based on transition management using seven transition priorities to achieve its ambitions (circular economy, living, learning and working in 2050, industry 4.0, living together in 2050, mobility, energy and climate, environment for the future). Partnerships are crucial to achieving goals. Accordingly, Flanders is working closely with stakeholders.

Based on the Decree of 27 June 2013 on the Walloon sustainable development strategy (Stratégie wallonne de développement durable), Wallonia adopted the third Walloon sustainable development strategy on 22 September 2022. The strategy links the main Walloon plans to the SDGs, sets 89 quantified targets for 2030, presents and evaluates 91 indicators for monitoring the SDGs and proposes a plan of 16 cross-sectional actions. To mobilize all Walloon actors, an action plan of the strategy has been drawn up and will be implemented in collaboration with the Walloon partnership for sustainable development (Partenariat wallon pour le développement durable), a 25-member multi-actor consultative body created in 2021.

The Brussels-Capital Region defined its vision for 2040 with the adoption of the regional plan for sustainable development (Gewestelijk plan voor duurzame ontwikkeling (GPDO) / Plan régional de développement durable (PRDD)) – a strategic document for pursuing the SDGs in the Brussels Region – in July 2018. The GPDO/PRDD aims to provide an appropriate response to the challenges facing Brussels as an agglomeration, including access to housing, functional and social diversity, different types of mobility or environmental issues. Other regulations are also aimed at pursuing the SDGs, such as Shifting Economy or the Brussels air, climate and energy code (Brussels wetboek van lucht, klimaat en energie (BWLKE) / Code bruxellois de l'air, du climat et de la maîtrise de l'énergie (COBRACE)), which includes numerous measures related to energy efficiency, the development of renewable energy sources, transport, air quality and climate.

Since 2009, the regional development plan for the East Cantons (Ostbelgien Leben 2025) has been structuring the long-term development perspective of the German-speaking Community in various implementation phases. The final five-year implementation phase 2019–2024 is linked to the SDGs. Through a participatory process, the German-speaking Community is working on a new long-term development strategy (Ostbelgien Leben 2040), which will address future challenges and will also be linked to the SDGs.

In March 2023, the Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles – FWB) will introduce a new organizational structure: a general service for sustainable development (Service général du Développement durable) and cross-sectional policies (Politiques transversales) will be created and will include a sustainable development department (Pôle développement durable) whose missions will be linked to the 17 SDGs that fall under the FWB's remit.

2. Belgium's progress with the SDGs

The evaluation of the evolutions of national indicators in the Indicators of Sustainable Development report published in February 2023 relies mainly on an assessment of the progress of 51 indicators

of sustainable development towards their targets. All these indicators are published, where possible with breakdowns by region, gender, income groups, etc. at www.indicators.be.

The targets are defined based on the UN SDGs or other Belgian commitments.

- A time-bound quantitative target exists for some indicators. These goals are called numerical targets. In this case, the evaluation determines whether that numerical target can be achieved by the set deadline if the current trend continues.
- If the indicator has no numerical target, the target only defines a direction for the desired trend (up or down). In this case, the evaluation is to determine whether or not the indicator has moved in the desired direction in the past (since 2000).

This national assessment shows that under the continuation of current trends, few SDGs will be achieved in Belgium by 2030.

Of the 25 indicators with numerical targets, eight are expected to reach their target if current trends continue, e.g. Exposure to particulate matter (i55) or Daily smokers (i22). However, 16 indicators are not expected to meet their targets, including Non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions (i63) or Risk of poverty or social exclusion (i01).

Of the 26 indicators without a numerical target, twelve moved towards their target between 2000 and 2021, for example, Forests with FSC or PEFC label (i70) or Very low work intensity (i02). Two indicators moved in the opposite direction from their target, namely Farmland bird population (i71) and Public debt (i82). For the remaining twelve indicators, the trend is stable or undetermined.

It should be noted that when the results are presented by component, as in Table 2, the favourable evaluations are more frequent in the environmental component and less frequent in the social component. The economy and governance components do not contain enough indicators to make a significant overview of the evaluations.

Table 2 | Review 2022 of Belgium’s progress towards the SDGs
Overview by component

	Evaluation	Social component	Environmental component	Economic component	Governance component	Total
With a numerical goal	Favourable	2	2	1	-	8
	Unfavourable	9	5	3	2	16
	Undetermined	1	-	-	-	1
Direction	Favourable	4	6	1	1	12
	Unfavourable	0	1	1	-	2
	Undetermined	7	2	1	2	12

Source: FPB

Box 1: Overview of key measures contributing to the achievement of the SDGs

This NRP contains many measures that address social, environmental and economic issues. In the context of the energy crisis, measures have been taken to ensure access to energy (§3.5.1), especially for the poorest (SDGs 1 and 10) and to protect workers who are temporarily unemployed (SDG 8) and to protect them from the energy crisis (§3.2.1). It is also about reducing energy demand, which contributes to the climate goals, with efforts around building insulation (§3.4.1 and §3.5.1) and on renewable energy and hydrogen (§3.4.1), which contribute to SDGs 7, 9, 11 and 13.

Measures are also proposed to increase employment rates and combat labour shortages in certain sectors (SDG 8) for example, by improving worker training (SDG 4) and by better supporting return to work after long-term illness (§3.2.1). In the area of education and training (SDG 4), there is a focus on alternate vocational training, teacher training and the attractiveness of scientific education (§3.2.2).

The modal shift, both for freight to rail and for passengers to active modes and public transport (SDGs 9, 10, 11 and 13), also receives special attention (§3.4.2). The same goes for the circular economy, which concerns SDGs 8, 12 and 15 (§3.4.3).

Use of European structural and investment funds

For the period 2021–2027, Belgium is eligible for a budget of 2 320.4 million euros in European co-financing under the Investing in Growth and Jobs objective and 182.6 million euros under the Just Transition Fund.

The Partnership Agreement for Belgium was validated by the Commission in mid-December 2022, and the various ERDF and ESF+ Operational Programmes (OPs) have been submitted to and approved by the Commission; only the ERDF Brussels OP remains to be finally validated in early 2023. In parallel with the approval process of the programming documents, the first ERDF and ESF+ calls for projects by the various entities were launched in 2022 or planned for early 2023, and project selection will take place in 2023. The call for projects related to the Just Transition Fund will take place in the first half of 2023.

As for the ERDF, resources will be focused mainly on the strategic objectives of a smarter and greener Europe, through measures to support innovation, SME and entrepreneurship development, digital transformation, the development of the circular economy, the low-carbon transition and pollution reduction. Depending on the region, they will also focus on mobility, development of training infrastructure, housing and local development.

For the ESF+, the priorities identified in Wallonia and Brussels are: improving access to employment, self-creation of employment, promotion of lifelong learning, social innovation, implementation of the Youth Guarantee, inclusive education, combating early school leaving and fighting poverty (including child poverty), social inclusion and de-institutionalization. Particular emphasis is placed on the most vulnerable groups: children and young people in precarious situations, the long-term unemployed, low-skilled people, and women. In Flanders, the programme approved in late 2021 consists of five priorities: access to the labour market, social inclusion, lifelong learning, investing in sustainable jobs, and an inclusive labour market and social innovation. A call for local partnerships to support the most precarious job seekers and inactive people will be launched in 2023. The partnerships aim to enable the most vulnerable non-working people to participate fully in society through a tailored approach. In the German-speaking Community, the priorities are: access to employment through better vocational guidance and counselling, improving the employability of disadvantaged unemployed people with multiple barriers to placement through socio-professional (re)integration measures, and promoting flexible access to education and training, taking into account the new needs of the labour market.

For the Territorial Co-operation component, Belgium will receive total co-financing of 374.3 million euros. The priorities set for these programmes are mainly based on six strategic objectives: developing and improving research and innovation capacities and the use of advanced technologies, strengthening the sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, climate change adaptation, supporting renewable energy, sustainable mobility, strengthening the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation, as well as strengthening governance in cooperation programmes. Calls for Interreg's various cross-border and transnational programmes were launched at the end of 2022, with the exception of the Meuse-Rhine programme, for which the call was launched in February 2023.

Institutional process and stakeholder involvement

The elaboration of the NRP is the result of intensive and fruitful cooperation between the federal government and the regional and community governments. These in turn involved various actors in developing their own contributions to the NRP (Annexes 1 to 5). There was also intense cooperation between the federal government and the regional and community governments during the European Commission's fact-finding mission of 14 December 2022.

At the Belgian level, proper coordination between the different levels of competence for the implementation of reforms is ensured by the consultation committee (Overlegcomité / Comité de concertation), which provides the institutional framework necessary for this structured coordination. It was also this consultation committee that gave final approval to this NRP on 28 April. Coordination between the different levels of competence also results in cooperation agreements between the federal state and communities and regions or between communities and regions themselves within their respective areas of competence. Between April 2022 and April 2023, as in previous years, numerous cooperative agreements were signed, including on the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Dialogue and mutual cooperation with the different sectors of our economy is a priority for the various governments. The social partners and civil society were also consulted in the drafting of this NRP and they requested that certain documents be included as annexes (Annex 6).

Belgium has a strong tradition of collective bargaining and social dialogue. Thus, the social partners continually conclude collective bargaining agreements (Conventions collectives de travail (CCT) / Collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst (cao)) and other agreements at intersectoral, sectoral and company levels. They are also represented on the management committee of most social security institutions, as well as on federal and regional consultative bodies. Moreover, they are informed and consulted by governments at all levels on all policies that affect them. They are also often asked to participate concretely in the implementation of policies adopted by the government. The 1996 Law gives the central council of employers and employees (Conseil central de l'économie (CCE) / Centrale Raad voor het Bedrijfsleven (CRB)) the permanent task of monitoring Belgium's competitiveness. Under this law, which was amended in 2017, the CCE/CRB must also prepare a report on competitiveness and employment.

This involvement of the social partners is not limited to the national level. The regions and communities also organize consultations with the social partners within the framework of the

European semester, each according to their own practices. In addition, at the European level, the social partners are involved in the dynamics of the European semester via the contacts and hearings organized at the Council level through the Belgian representatives on the European committees. The social partners are thus closely involved through their representative on the EMCO (Employment Committee) and SPC (Social Protection Committee). Meetings between members of the CCE/CRB, the national labour council (Conseil national du travail (CNT) / Nationale Arbeidsraad (NAR)) and the Commission's Belgian Desk also take place at key points in the European semester.

As part of this consultation dynamic, the social partners will also be consulted, as in the past, between the publication of the draft country-specific recommendations and the discussion of this text in the committees and bodies of the Council.

In addition, the European Commission itself organises regular meetings with the social partners, including ahead of the preparation of the Country Report, and the Belgian partner organisations have always been very active in their respective umbrella organizations.

The elaboration and implementation of policies under the European Semester, especially in the field of employment and social policy, is generally done in cooperation with the social partners. This can take the form of advance opinions on proposed policies, such as federal measures, or advance agreements between the social partners that are then translated into regulations.

Attachments

Attachment 1 | Flemish Region and Flemish Community

Attachment 2 | Brussels Capital Region

Attachment 3 | Walloon Region

Attachment 4 | German-speaking Community

Attachment 5 | French Community

Attachment 6 | Advice of the CCE



Flanders
State of the Art

FLEMISH REFORM PROGRAMME 2023

31 MARCH 2023

1. PREFACE

The present Flemish Reform Programme (FRP) 2023 (Vlaams Hervormingsprogramma/VHP) is already the twelfth reform programme drawn up by Flanders in the context of the European Semester (ES). As such, Flanders holds a unique position in the European Union (EU) as the only federated state to have systematically compiled its own reform programme since the start of the ES in 2011. This perfectly illustrates the importance Flanders has always attached to following the ES. The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have had, and continue to have, a socio-economic impact on Flanders.

To strengthen prosperity in Flanders and the well-being of the Flemish people, the Government of Flanders launched the **Flemish Resilience Recovery Plan** (Relanceplan Vlaamse Veerkracht/VV) at the end of September 2020. Totalling €4.3 billion, this is the most ambitious investment plan ever initiated by a Government of Flanders. To keep a finger on the pulse, this plan is being monitored very closely. The latest monitoring report¹ submitted to the Government of Flanders in February 2023 shows that the implementation of the Flemish Resilience projects is very much on schedule: 97% of the projects are under implementation following a decision by the Government of Flanders or have been realised, and 95% of the projects have been committed. The Government of Flanders is also closely monitoring the recovery through the **online dashboard**²: 36 indicators show the evolution of the economic and societal situation in Flanders in four areas (macroeconomic and budgetary control, sustainable growth, inclusive growth, sound growth). The Government of Flanders also continues to actively promote **communication** on the recovery plan projects. In terms of public communication, the Government of Flanders worked on a follow-up to the first communication campaign in late 2022. Meanwhile, an English-language VV website³ is now also available for consultation. Following the Ukraine crisis, a new project has been added to VV, viz. a project supporting the fisheries and agriculture sector, which means 181 projects are now being monitored. Flemish Resilience also formed the basis for Flanders' input into the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)** (Nationaal Plan voor Herstel en Veerkracht/NPHV), which is framed within the EU's **Recovery and Resilience Facility**⁴ (RRF).

As for the content of the FRP 2023, Part 3, in which Flanders **provides** a tailor-made response to the **Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) 2022**, **takes centre stage** again. This chapter also outlines progress on **Flanders' projects under the NRRP**. In addition, the present FRP 2023 addresses the main **macroeconomic developments** in the Flemish Region (Part 2), the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** governance (Part 4), the European **structural funds** (Part 5) and **stakeholder involvement** in the FRP and the NRRP (Part 6). Throughout the FRP 2023, attention is also devoted to the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and the 2030 targets 'Employment', 'Skills' and 'Social Protection'. The 80% employment rate to be achieved by 2030 remains a very important compass and objective of the Government of Flanders.

Through the measures put forward in the present FRP 2023, the Government of Flanders shows its continued full commitment to an ambitious and coherent (international) policy. The Government of Flanders is a government of investment that also considers the introduction of structural reforms to be of paramount importance, without losing sight of the sustainability of public finances.

The Government of Flanders continues to follow the EU agenda very closely. On 3 February 2023, for example, it adopted its Vision Paper⁵ "*Strengthening the Competitiveness of the European Industry*". The Government of Flanders believes that the European competitiveness strategy⁶ should be underpinned by a strong industrial

¹ <https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-regering/vlaamse-veerkracht>

² <https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-regering/vlaamse-veerkracht#dashboard-vlaamse-veerkracht>

³ <https://www.vlaanderen.be/en/authorities/flemish-resilience>

⁴ https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en

⁵ <https://fdfa.be/en/government-of-flanders-vision-paper-strengthening-the-competitiveness-of-the-european-industry>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_510 en
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_1665

and innovation policy, paying sufficient attention to energy costs, targeted funding and the importance of international partnerships. The positions taken in this vision paper will feed into the intra-Belgian and European discussions.

As was the case with the previous reform programmes, the Government of Flanders will urge the EC to also provide **region-specific recommendations**. I am therefore very favourably disposed to the Flemish Parliament's Resolution⁷ of 13 July 2022 on engaging in political dialogue with the EC on region-specific analyses, statistics and recommendations within the framework of the ES. The Government of Flanders and the Flemish Parliament are joining forces to this end. This final element should allow the Government of Flanders to adopt an even more tailored response to the recommendations and analyses and as such increase political and societal support for the ES in Flanders even more. The added value of the active involvement of the Flemish Parliament and the Government of Flanders in the ES is very clearly recognised in the EC's response to the Flemish Parliament's Resolution⁸: *"(...) As noted in the Opinion, the Commission services are also very regularly exchanging at political and administrative level with Flanders in the context of the European Semester, as for the implementation of Belgium's Recovery and Resilience Plan. The Commission would like to take the opportunity to underline its appreciation of the quality of exchanges and availability of the Flemish authorities. These exchanges are notably enriching the Commission's understanding of region-specific challenges, as well as the policies conducted by Flanders to address them."*

This appreciation by the EC strengthens the Government of Flanders in its conviction to continue to show active engagement and provide quality input in the context of the ES in the years to come. Flanders also remains firmly committed to the **Technical Support Instrument (TSI)**⁹, i.e. the EU programme that provides tailor-made technical expertise to EU Member States to design and implement reforms. It is no coincidence that the European level has picked up the fact that Flanders is following the ES, the NRRP and the TSI and shared its TSI expertise during the European Week of Regions and Cities¹⁰ (10-13 October 2022). As such, Flanders highlights the way in which it follows the ES in a structural manner at the European level¹¹.

The present FRP 2023 may well be the last of its kind. In its Communication¹² of 9 November 2022 on **orientations for a reform of the EU economic governance framework**, the EC aims, among other things, to draw up national medium-term fiscal-structural plans that would merge the current Stability and Convergence Programmes with the National Reform Programmes. The EC will put forward legislative proposals in the course of April. Flanders will continue to closely monitor developments regarding the reform of the EU economic governance framework. Early last year, the Government of Flanders already adopted a position paper setting out its vision for this reform¹³.

Jan Jambon
Minister-President of Flanders

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⁷ <https://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1863135>

⁸ More information on the political dialogue is available at https://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/reactions/reactions_other/npo/belgium/2022_en.htm. The EC's response to the Flemish Parliament Resolution is available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/reactions/reactions_other/npo/docs/belgium/2022/com20220600/com20220600_sen_at_reply_en.pdf

⁹ https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/technical-support-instrument/technical-support-instrument-tsi_en

¹⁰ Empowering national, regional and local administrations to implement the Recovery and Resilience Plans

<https://eu.app.swapcard.com/event/euregionsweek-2022/planning/UGxhbm5pbmdfOTYwNDIy>

¹¹ More information on how Flanders has been following the ES over the past years can be found on the website of the Delegation of Flanders to the European Union: <https://flandersineu.be/en/priorities/european-semester>

¹² https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-and-fiscal-governance/economic-governance-review_en

¹³ <https://beslissingenvlaamseregering.vlaanderen.be/document-view/61E1592B364ED90008000AEA>

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This document is the English translation of the Flemish Reform Programme (FRP) 2023. The official version of the FRP (in Dutch) was adopted by the Government of Flanders on 31 March 2020 and can be consulted at <https://www.flandersineu.be/nl/vlaams-herformingsprogramma-2023>.

2. MACROECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

This part discusses a number of socio-economic indicators relevant to the ES, including the EU 2030 targets (Employment, Participation in further training, Risk of poverty or social exclusion) set by the EU in May 2021 under the EPSR.

2.1. Economy

Economic growth weakens in 2023, but remains higher than the Belgian and EU averages

Economic activity in Flanders dropped sharply in 2020 due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis. The contraction was especially felt in the first half of 2020. Activity picked up again from the 3rd quarter of 2020. Rising vaccination rates and the gradual relaxation of restrictive measures gave fresh impetus to the economic recovery in 2021.

In 2021, real GDP growth was 7.0%, making the GDP level 1.1% higher in real terms than in 2019 (the year before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic). The EU and the neighbouring countries recorded lower growth rates in 2021. War broke out in Ukraine in February 2022. This caused additional pressure on already rising commodity and energy prices and created uncertainty among producers and consumers. The HERMREG model¹⁴ estimated GDP growth in Flanders for 2022 at +2.8% in July 2022 and at +1.3% in 2023 (slowdown in growth due to spiking inflation). The latest Belgian estimate for 2023 was 1.0% in February 2023.

Economic growth in real terms, Flemish Region, Belgium, EU-27 and the neighbouring countries, 2020-2023 (in %)

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Flemish Region	-5.5	7.0	2.8	1.3
Belgium	-5.4	6.1	3.1	1.0
EU-27	-5.7	5.4	3.3	0.3
Germany	-3.7	2.6	1.6	-0.6
France	-7.8	6.8	2.6	0.4
The Netherlands	-3.9	4.9	4.7	0.6

Source: Flemish Region: HERMREG-Federal Planning Bureau (FPB), Brussels Institute of Statistics and Analysis (BISA), Flanders Statistics Authority (VSA) (July 2022), Belgium: FPB (February 2023), EU-27 and other countries: Annual macro-economic database of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (AMECO) (March 2023)

Flanders: a prosperous economy with high labour productivity

The Flemish Region realised a GDP per capita of €43,300 purchasing power standard (PPS) in 2022 (estimate of the Flanders Statistics Authority/VSA). This is 27% higher than the EU-27 average (the current 27 EU Member States without the UK). In 2021, 8.7% of the economically active population in Flanders commuted to the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR). If GDP is corrected by adding net employment of commuters (VSA estimate), GDP per capita would be €46,400 PPS in 2022, or 36% higher than the EU-27 average.

GDP per capita is composed of:

- **Labour productivity (GDP relative to employment, Source: HERMREG and regional accounts):** this amounted to **€98,000 PPS in 2022, which is 34% higher than the EU-27 average**. The gap with the EU-27 narrowed between 2000 (+36%) and 2020 (+27%), but enlarged again in 2021 and 2022. Labour productivity is a cornerstone of our prosperity. According to the latest analyses¹⁵ by the National Productivity Board labour productivity per hour grew at an average annual rate of 0.9% in the Flemish Region between 2003 and 2019. The overall growth rate shows a slowdown (+1.9% on average during 2003-2007, +0.6% on average during 2012-2019).
- **The job ratio (employment in a region, regardless of where workers live, in relation to the resident population aged 15 to 64, based on regional accounts and HERMREG):** the job ratio stood at **70.4% in the Flemish Region** in 2022, which is lower than in the EU-27 (73.8%) because of high labour productivity (= less labour required to produce GDP) and commuting to Brussels-Capital (Flemish commuters are counted as part of the Brussels job ratio). Compared to 2000, the job ratio in Flanders has increased by ten percentage points.

¹⁴ Belgian econometric model for drawing up regional medium-term forecasts

¹⁵ National Productivity Board - Annual report 2022, December 2022: https://www.cnp-nrp.belgium.be/publications/publication_det.php?lang=en&KeyPub=467

- The proportion of the population aged 15 to 64: this was 62.8% in 2022. In the EU-27, the share of the population aged 15 to 64 is slightly higher (63.1%). This indicator is declining over the long term, in both the Flemish Region and the EU-27. As time passes, the gap between the two is narrowing.

Flanders' exports at a record high in 2021

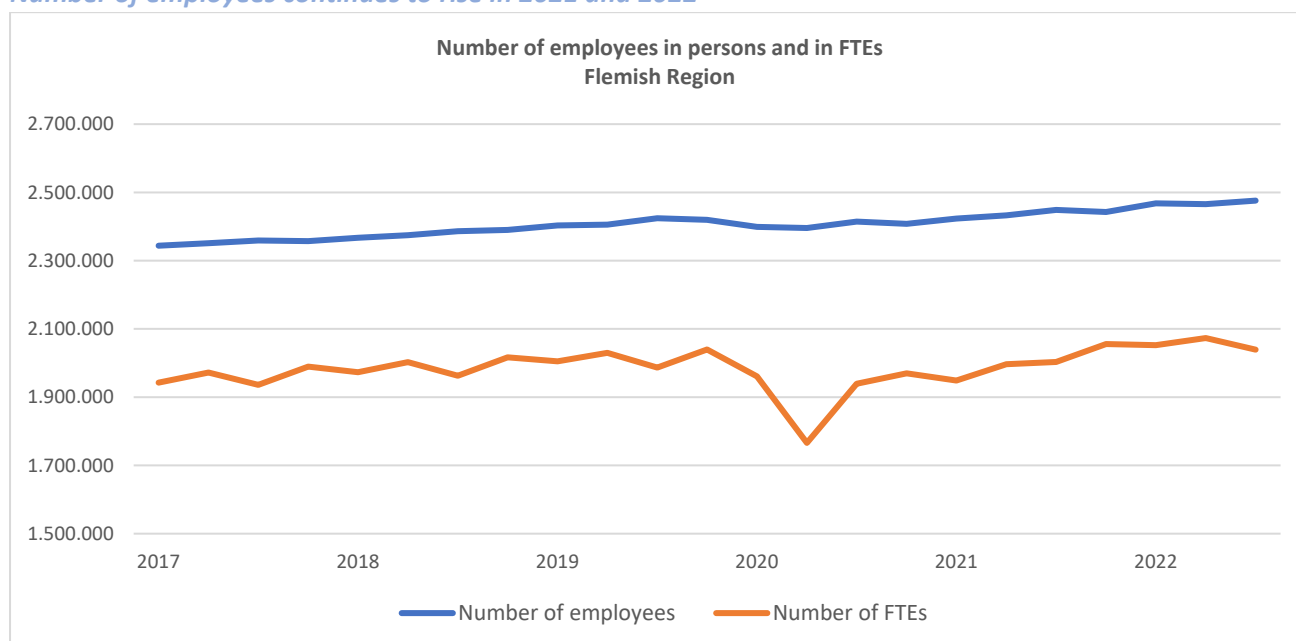
Flanders' goods exports totalled **€381 billion in 2021** according to the Community concept. In current prices, this is **28% higher than in 2020**. This is due to the recovery of the economy, the (partial) relaxation of COVID-19 measures and associated restrictions, and the catch-up demand following the 2020 recession. The fact that trade flows are expressed in current prices also plays a role: increased inflation in 2021 reinforced the rise in value of exports and imports. This was particularly the case for oil and natural gas. Imports also increased in nominal prices in 2021 (+34%).

The EU-27 is the main export and import market for the Flemish Region (64.6% and 60.7% in 2021). Compared to 2020, the importance of the EU-27 increased on both the export and import side (+1.0 and +2.6 percentage points). On 1 January 2021, the United Kingdom (UK) left the EU for good. The UK share in Flemish exports fell from 8.2% in 2020 to 6.2% in 2021. On the import side, there was a decline from 4.3% in 2020 to 3.8% in 2021. The conflict in Ukraine also affects our trade with Russia, although Russia's share in Flemish exports and imports is small (1.0% and 1.8% in 2021). In the first quarter of 2022, there was initially an increase in exports and imports with Russia. After that, exports dropped but imports rose, due to the increased import value of gas and oil.

The Flemish Region accounted for 82% of total Belgian goods exports and 84% of Belgian goods imports in 2021.

2.2. Work and labour market

Number of employees continues to rise in 2021 and 2022



Source: National Social Security Office (NSSO), rapid estimates, edited by Statistics Flanders

Thanks to the temporary unemployment scheme (stelsel tijdelijke werkloosheid), **salaried employment** did not sharply fall during the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. The number of employees was 0.2% to 0.5% lower during each quarter of 2020 compared to the same quarter of 2019. An increase was recorded again (+1.0%) from the first quarter of 2021. In the third quarter of 2022, 27,426 more salaried employees were recorded than in the third quarter of 2021 and even 61,266 more than in the third quarter of 2020.

Volume of labour is recovering

Employment in full-time equivalents (FTEs) experienced a notable decline in the second quarter of 2020, when restrictive measures were vigorously implemented. The number of FTEs dropped more significantly than that of the salaried employees because of the temporary unemployment scheme.

There was a year-on-year increase again from the second quarter of 2021. A further rise was recorded in subsequent quarters, but it was less pronounced in the third quarter of 2022 (+1.8% compared to third quarter 2021).

Number of jobseekers continues to drop and is below pre-pandemic level

The unemployment rate (15-64 age group) in Flanders dropped to 3.2% in 2022. The International Labour Organization (ILO) unemployment rate in Flanders is significantly lower than the Belgian average of 5.6% and the EU-27 average of 6.1% (2022). The unemployment rate in the Walloon Region is 8.4% and in the BCR 11.5% (source: Labour Force Survey (LFS)). The number of jobseekers in Flanders **continues to drop, remaining much lower than the pre-pandemic level** (source: Public Employment Service of Flanders (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling/VDAB). The Flemish Region had an average of 177,956 unemployed jobseekers (werkzoekenden zonder werk/WZWs) in 2022, which is 7.9% less than in 2021. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the number of WZWs went up in 2020 to subsequently go down again 2021 and 2022¹⁶.

Employment rate of 76.7% among people aged 20 to 64 in work

In 2022, the employment rate¹⁷ among the population aged 20 to 64 in the Flemish Region was 76,7%, which is about three percentage points short of Flanders' 80% target and only 1.3 percentage points short of the target set in the EPSR (78%). The employment rate is distinctly higher in Flanders than in the other Regions. It was 65.7% in the Walloon Region, 65.2% in the BCR and 71.9% in Belgium as a whole. The EU-27 average was 74.7%.

Employment rate of 20-64 age group, in total and broken down by disadvantaged groups (Flemish Region, 2010-2022, in %)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*	2022*	EU-27 average 2021
Employment rate (20-64 age group)	72.1	71.8	71.5	71.9	71.9	71.9	72.0	73.0	74.6	75.5	74.7	75.3	76.7	74.7 (2022)
Sub-indicators employment rate disadvantaged groups														
50-64 age group	53.1	53.6	54.6	56.5	57.5	58.1	59.1	60.8	63.5	64.8	64.7	65.7	67.9	67.3
55-64 age group	38.2	38.9	40.5	42.9	44.3	45.6	46.7	49.5	52.5	54.9	55.7	57.0	59.5	60.5
Women (20-64 age group)	66.7	66.4	66.2	66.9	67.6	68.2	67.7	68.2	70.7	71.5	70.9	71.9	73.2	67.7
Men*** (20-64 age group)	77.4	77.0	76.7	76.8	76.2	75.6	76.3	77.7	78.5	79.3	78.5	78.6	80.2	78.5
Born outside EU** (20-64 age group)	53.4	53.0	51.8	54.9	53.3	53.7	53.0	56.0	61.2	61.9	59.2	59.8	-	63.4
With work-limiting disability (20-64 age group)	33.5	38.6	38.7	40.4	42.7	43.1	41.1	43.3	45.8	45.6	46.0	49.2	-	-

Source: LFS Statbel (Directorate-General for Statistics - Statistics Belgium), edited by the Centre of Expertise for Labour Market Monitoring and Statistics Flanders

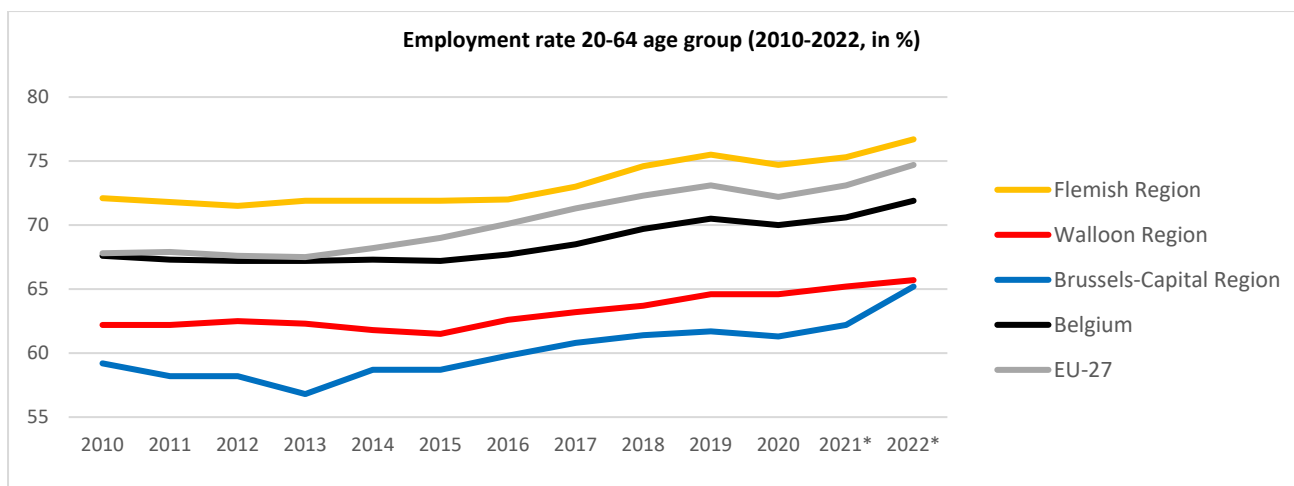
*Note: the figures included in the chart are estimates based on a survey. Consequently, a margin of error must be factored in. In addition, there is a break in time series between 2016 and 2017. * The LFS questionnaire was revised in 2021. The main change is that from 2021 onwards, those who are temporarily unemployed for more than three months are counted as unemployed or inactive, rather than employed, depending on their answers to the questions on job search and availability. ** EU refers to EU-28 (28 EU Member States including UK) for the years 2010-2019. For the year 2020, EU refers to EU-27¹⁸ (without UK). ***: no disadvantaged group.*

The employment rate fluctuated around 72% between 2010 and 2016, and then increased to 75.5% in 2019. In 2020, there was a slight drop compared to 2019, which was offset in 2021 and 2022. The employment rate among women rose more sharply than among men, yet the male employment rate is higher than the female employment rate in 2022. The employment rate in the 55-64 age group was lower than that of the other age groups in the period from 1999 to 2022, and yet this group experienced the sharpest increase from 23.7% in 1999 to 59.5% in 2022. The employment rate is lower among non-EU-born people as well as among people with work-limiting disabilities or long-term health issues.

¹⁶ Since November 2022, however, the VDABA has recorded a year-on-year increase again in the number of WZWs.

¹⁷ <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/work-training/labour-market/employment-and-unemployment>

¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:EU_enlargements



Source: LFS Statbel (Directorate-General for Statistics - Statistics Belgium), edited by the Centre of Expertise for Labour Market Monitoring and Statistics Flanders

*Note: the figures included in the chart are estimates based on a survey. Consequently, a margin of error must be factored in. In addition, there is a break in time series between 2016 and 2017. * The LFS questionnaire was revised in 2021. The main change is that from 2021 onwards, those who are temporarily unemployed for more than three months are counted as unemployed or inactive, rather than on employed, depending on their answers to the questions on job search and availability. ** EU refers to EU-28 (28 Member States including UK) for the years 2010-2019. For the year 2020, EU refers to EU-27¹⁹ (without UK).*

2.3. Education

Early school leavers (18-24 age group), higher education graduates (30-34 age group), NEET (15-24 age group), training participation of population aged 25 to 64 (past 4 weeks) (Flemish Region, 2010-2022, in %)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*	2022*	EU-27 average 2021
Early school leavers	9.6	9.6	8.7	7.5	7.0	7.2	6.8	7.2	7.3	6.2	6.7	5.3	4.9	9.7
30-34 age group with higher education degree	44.9	42.3	45.3	44.1	44.8	43.2	47.3	46.4	48.2	48.5	49.3	52.4	56.2	41.6
NEET (15-24 age group)	7.5	8.5	9.2	10.5	9.8	9.5	7.5	7.2	7.8	7.5	7.3	6.0	4.9	10.8
Training participation of population aged 25 to 64 (past 4 weeks)	8.4	7.9	7.1	7.3	7.7	7	7.1	8.7	8.7	8.6	7.7	10.8	10.7	10.8

Note: the figures included in the chart are estimates based on a survey. Consequently, a margin of error must be factored in. In addition, there is a break in time series between 2016 and 2017. The LFS questionnaire was revised in 2021. Source: LFS Statbel (Directorate-General for Statistics - Statistics Belgium), edited by the Centre of Expertise for Labour Market Monitoring and Statistics Flanders

Further decrease in the number of early school leavers

According to the results of the Labour Force Survey (LFS), 4.9% of 18- to 24-year-olds in Flanders were early school leavers in 2022. These young people did not obtain any secondary education qualification nor were they in education or training in the four weeks prior to the survey. In 2010, the share of early school leavers in the 18-24 age group was still much higher (9.6%). Flanders performs significantly better than the Walloon Region (8.6%), the BCR (7.4%) and Belgium (6.4%). The EU-27 average was 9.7% in 2021.

Record share of higher education graduates in the 30-34 age group

In 2022, 56.2% of 30- to 34-year-olds is highly educated (higher education degree). The share of higher education graduates has clearly risen in recent years. The share was 53.1% in Belgium, 60.5% in the BCR and 44.3% in the Walloon Region. In the EU-27, the share of higher education graduates in the 30-34 age group (41.6% in 2021) was significantly lower than in the Flemish Region.

Flanders performs well in terms of young people aged 15 to 24 who are not in employment, education or training

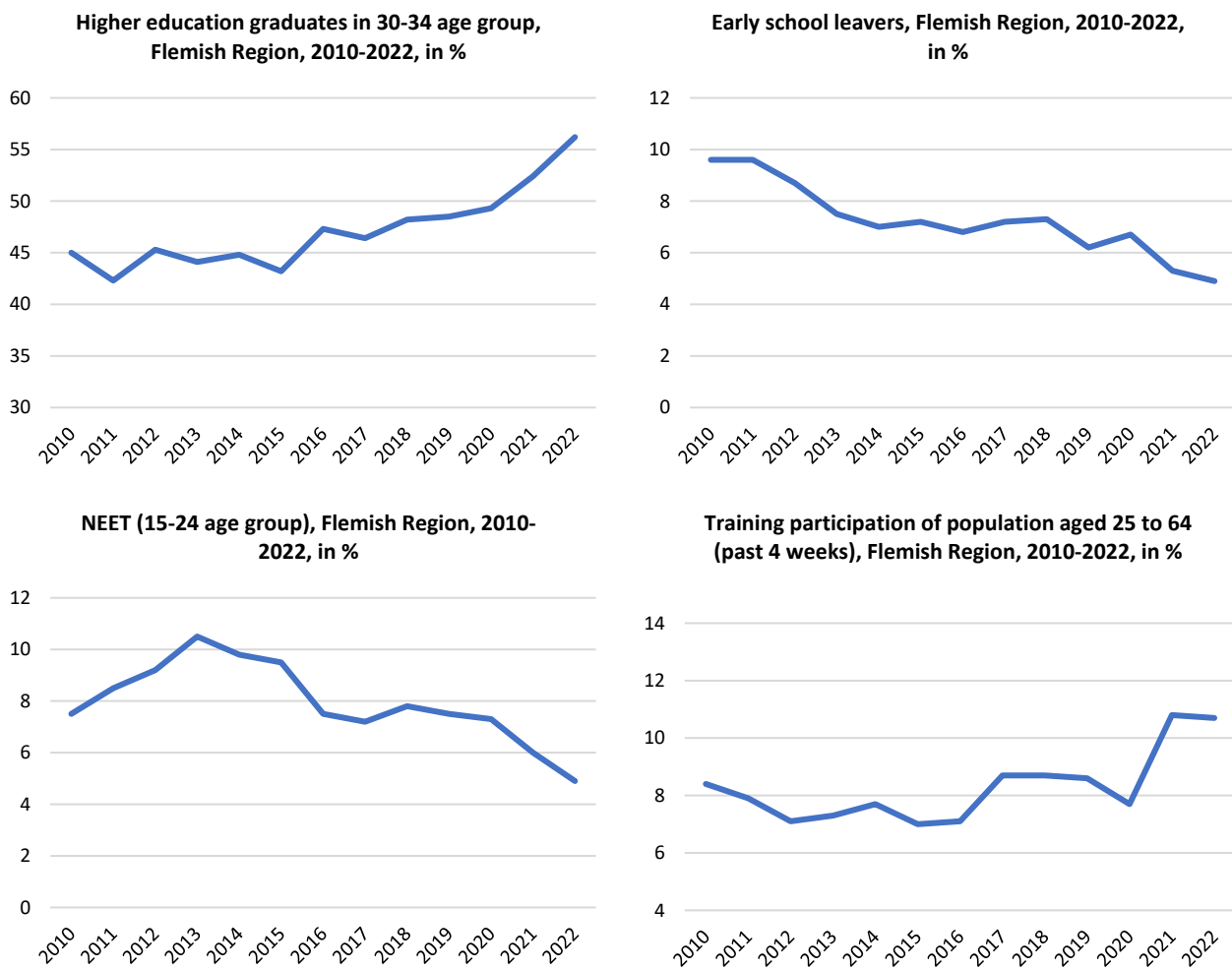
¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:EU_enlargements

NEET youth are young people who are not in employment, education or training. In 2022, Flanders performed very well in the EU-27 context (10.8% in 2021) with a rate of 4.9% (15-24 age group). Flanders scores better than Wallonia (8.4%) and Brussels (9.1%). In Belgium, 6.6% on average of 15-24 year-olds was neither in work nor had followed training. The COVID-19 pandemic did not halt the falling NEET trend.

Increase in lifelong learning

In 2022, 10.7% of the population of the Flemish Region aged between 25 and 64 followed a training course (within or outside mainstream education) in the four weeks prior to the survey. Training participation varied constantly between 7% and 9% in the 2006-2020 period. Training participation in Flanders is significantly higher than in the Walloon Region (8.1%) and better than the Belgian average (10.3%). In 2021, Flanders almost equals the EU-27 average (10.8%).

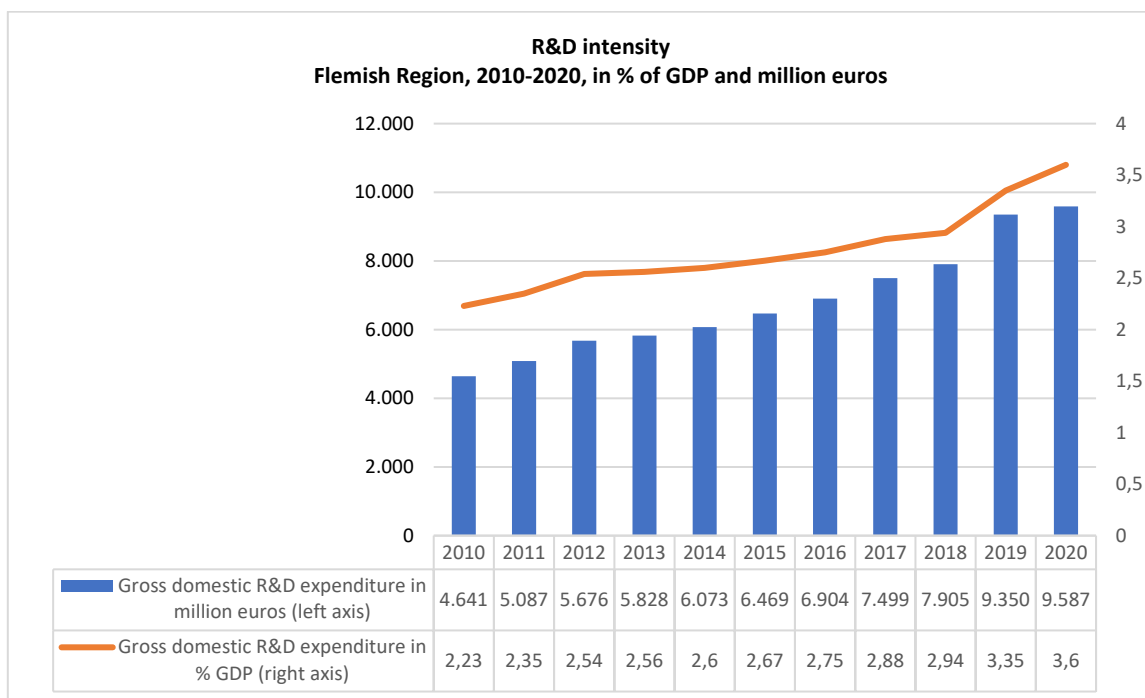
One of the EU 2030 targets under the EPSR Action Plan is to increase participation in further training (25-64 age group, in the last 12 months) to 60%. On 17 December 2021, the Government of Flanders consolidated the lifelong learning action plan 'Building a Learning Society in Flanders' (Koers zetten naar een lerend Vlaanderen) (see also 3.2.1.2.), through which Flanders subscribes to the European ambition to reach a 60% training participation rate (for (non-) formal learning according to the 12-month indicator) as a yardstick for a learning society. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES), Flanders reported a 47.7% participation rate in formal and non-formal learning in 2016. A new AES survey was conducted in 2022, the data of which should be available by the end of 2023.



2.4. Research and development (R&D)

R&D intensity at 3.6% in 2020

R&D spending for 2020 was estimated at €9.6 billion in the Flemish Region. Like previous years, 2020 also saw an increase in R&D spending, which resulted in an **R&D intensity** of 3.6% of GDP. This indicator has been climbing in recent years. Since 2019, the Flemish Region has exceeded the 3% of GDP threshold. R&D intensity amounted to 3.5% in Belgium and was lower in the EU-27 (2.2%).



Source: Centre for Research & Development Monitoring (Flemish Science, Technology and Innovation System, ECOOM) (Expertisecentrum Onderzoek en Ontwikkelingsmonitoring (Vlaams Wetenschaps-, Technologie- en Innovatiesysteem, ECOOM), edited by Statistics Flanders

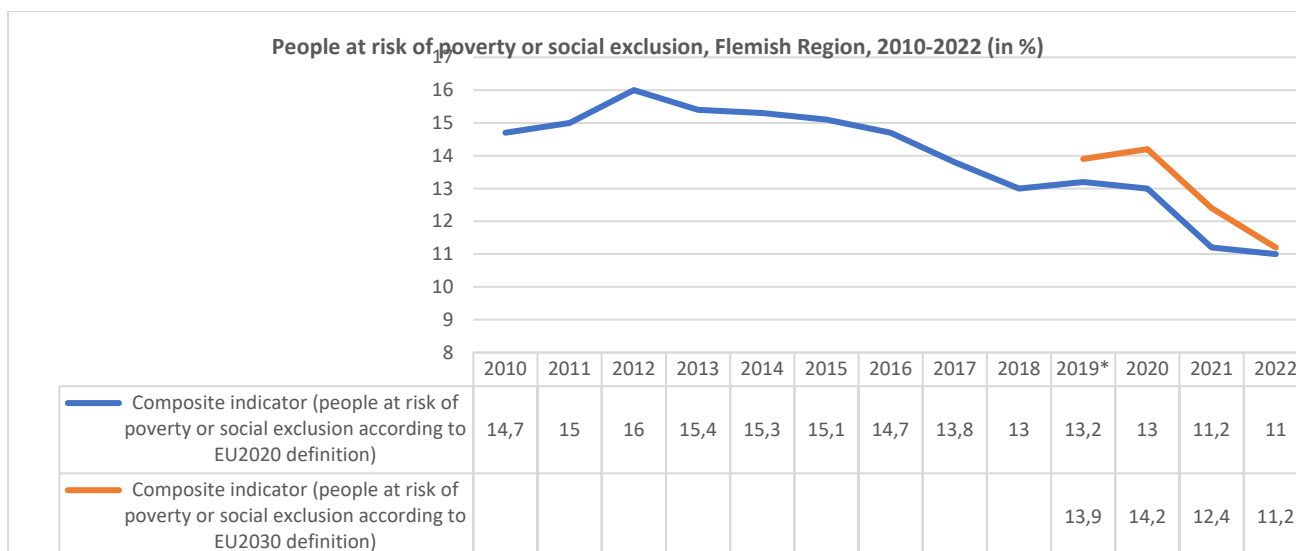
Flanders has an **innovation-driven economy**. A well-educated working population and a high educational attainment level are the cornerstones (see 2.3.).

In 2021, 9.3% of the total number of people in work in the Flemish Region were employed in high-tech sectors. In the EU-27 countries, high-tech sector employment was 9.8%, which is higher than in the Flemish Region. This is owing to the fact that this share was high in a number of Eastern European Member States and Germany (industry). Belgium (8.9%) recorded a lower figure. Finally, the number of patents applied for in the Flemish Region reached 279 per million inhabitants, which is the highest figure since 2008. The EU-27 average was 139 per million inhabitants in 2017.

2.5. Risk of poverty or social exclusion

Risk of poverty or social exclusion significantly lower in Flemish Region than in Belgium and EU-27

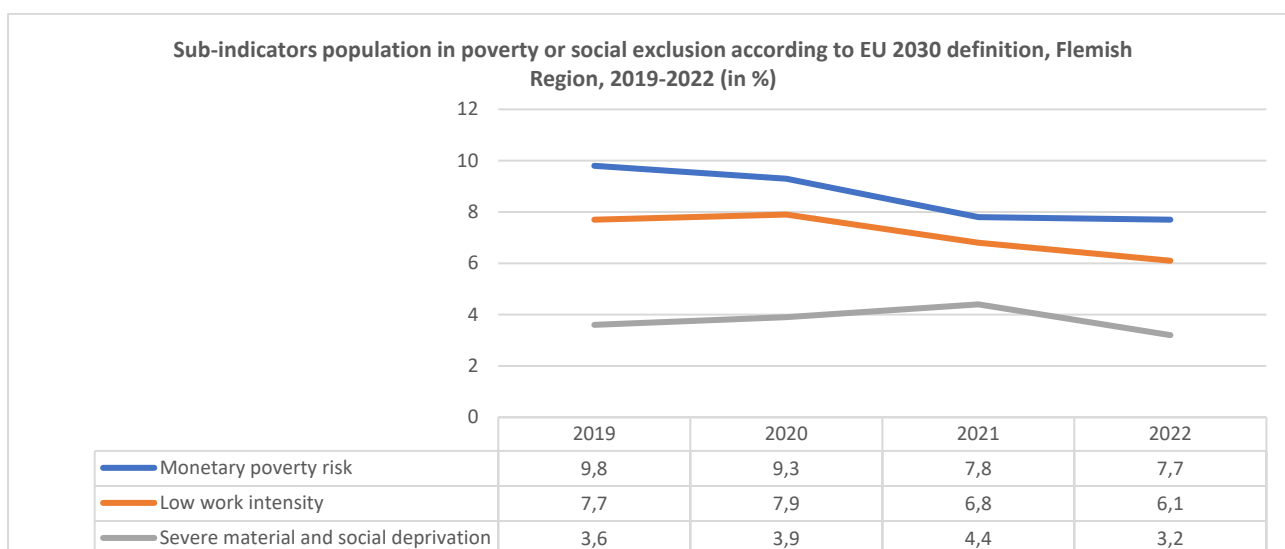
According to the EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC), **11.2% of the population of the Flemish Region was at risk of poverty or social exclusion** (according to new EU 2030 indicator) in 2022. This share was considerably lower in the Flemish Region than in Belgium (18.7%), the BCR (38.8%), Wallonia (25.8%) and the EU-27 (21.7% in 2021).



Note: the figures included in the chart were calculated on the basis of household incomes in the previous year. The EU-SILC survey underwent substantial changes in 2019, so caution is required when making comparisons with previous years. The definitions of 'At Risk Of Poverty or Social Exclusion' (AROPE) were changed within the framework of the new EU 2030 strategy. For instance, the indicator 'severe material deprivation' was extended to 'severe material and social deprivation', and the definition of 'living in a household with very low work intensity' was changed. The age limit was set at 64 years and a number of groups are now either included or excluded²⁰. Source: EU-SILC Statbel, edited by Statistics Flanders

For the **three sub-indicators**:

1. In 2022, **7.7% of the population of the Flemish Region** lived in a household with a household income below the Belgian poverty threshold. The *monetary poverty risk* in Flanders was significantly lower than in the other two Regions (29.8% in BCR and 17.8% in Walloon Region), and than the Belgian (13.2%) and EU-27 averages (16.8% in 2021).
2. In 2022, **3.2% of inhabitants of the Flemish Region** lived in a household in *severe material and social deprivation*. Flanders scores significantly better than the other two Regions (11.6% in BCR and 8.7% in Walloon Region), the Belgian average (5.8%) and the EU-27 average (6% in 2021).
3. In 2022, **6.1%** of the population up to the age of 64 lived in a *household with low work intensity*. The share in the Flemish Region was considerably lower than in the other two Regions (20.4% in BCR and 18.0% in Walloon Region), and than the Belgian (11.5%) and EU-27 (8.9% in 2021) averages.



Note: the figures included in the chart were calculated on the basis of household incomes in the previous year. Source: EU-SILC Statbel, edited by Statistics Flanders

²⁰ <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/households/poverty-and-livingconditions/plus>

2.6. Energy and climate

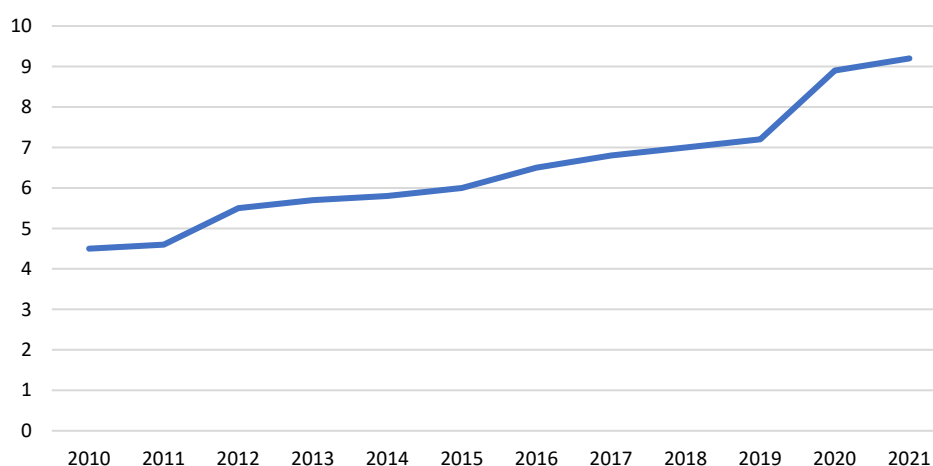
Share of renewable energy doubles in one decade

For renewable energy, the **Flemish Energy and Climate Plan** (Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatplan/**VEKP**) sets an indicative target of 28,512 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of renewable energy production by 2030. For energy efficiency, a target of absolute final energy consumption of 275,240 GWh by 2030 in the policy scenario (With Additional Measures, WAM) is set as a contribution to the national savings target (Art. 3 European Energy Efficiency Directive (EED)) and to the national target of 87.891 terawatt-hours (TWh) (= cumulated final energy savings over 2021-2030 period) under Article 7 EED. In 2021, final energy consumption from renewable sources amounted to 25,821 GWh in the Flemish Region. This put the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption at 9.2% in 2021.

Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (Flemish Region, 2010-2021, in GWh and %)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Final energy consumption from renewable sources (GWh)	13,304	12,711	15,281	16,319	15,762	16,716	18,417	19,197	19,798	20,138	23,139	25,821
Gross final energy consumption (GWh)	297,305	277,035	277,476	285,098	270,604	278,758	283,499	281,850	284,367	278,946	259,739	282,081
Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (%)	4.5	4.6	5.5	5.7	5.8	6.0	6.5	6.8	7.0	7.2	8.9	9.2

Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (%)



Source: Energy and Climate Agency of Flanders (Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatagentschap/VEKA)

Source: Energy and Climate Agency of Flanders (VEKA), edited by Statistics Flanders

Greenhouse gas reduction

Total emissions can be broken down into emissions regulated through the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) and those not covered by this system but by the national or regional climate target (through the Effort Sharing Regulation, ESR).

In its **Flemish Climate Strategy 2050** (Vlaamse Klimaatstrategie 2050) Flanders aims for an 85% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in ESR sectors by 2050, compared to 2005, with the ambition to evolve towards full climate neutrality. With regard to the ETS sectors, Flanders endorses the decisions made by Europe for these sectors in a context of a shrinking emission allocation under the EU ETS system.

An additional package of climate measures was decided in November 2021 to strengthen the VEKP²¹. This resulted in the **greenhouse gas emission reduction target in ESR sectors** being raised from -35% to **-40% by 2030** (compared to 2005).

²¹ https://assets.vlaanderen.be/image/upload/v1659456490/Visienota_bijkomende_maatregelen_aaxnal.pdf

Greenhouse gas emissions broken down between ETS and ESR (Flemish Region, 2005-2020, in Mt CO2 eq)

	2005	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total emissions	89.9	78.4	75.0	77.7	76.8	76.6	76.8	75.7	68.9
ETS	43.3	32.7	31.6	32.6	31.7	32.0	31.9	31.9	29.2
ESR	46.6	45.7	43.4	45.1	45.1	44.7	44.9	43.9	39.7

Note: these figures consider neither emissions and sinks from land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF), nor nitrogen trifluoride (NF3) emissions and CO2 emissions from domestic aviation. The reason for this is that the European burden-sharing and the burden-sharing between the Regions in our country do not take these emissions into consideration either, and these figures are intended precisely to make an assessment against the emission targets.

Source: VEKP Progress Report 2022²² based on figures from the Flanders Environment Agency (Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij/VMM)

ETS emissions for the most part include greenhouse gas emissions in industry and the energy sector. Over 40% of Flanders' greenhouse gas emissions are covered by the ETS system (the ETS target applies to Europe only and is not divided between Member States). Just under 60% of greenhouse gas emissions in Flanders are ESR emissions. Flanders has committed to reducing ESR emissions by 15.7% in 2020 in comparison with 2005. The latest progress report (October 2022) shows that ESR greenhouse gas emissions in Flanders fell from 46.6 Mt CO2 eq (megatons of carbon dioxide equivalent) in 2005 to 39.7 Mt CO2 eq in 2020. This is a 15% decrease between 2005 and 2020. If the crisis year 2020 is filtered out and only the 2005-2019 period is considered, this represents a 6% reduction in ESR greenhouse gas emissions. In terms of the greenhouse gas reduction target over the entire 2013-2020 period, Flanders recorded a limited deficit that was offset by international flexibility. Overall, it can be concluded that Flanders has met its climate target for the 2013-2020 period. In 2020, **gross domestic energy consumption** dropped 5% compared to 2019. This concerns primary energy use (amount of required energy or primary energy production and net energy imports) excluding international aviation and shipping.

²² VEKP, Progress Report 2022 (https://assets.vlaanderen.be/image/upload/v1667911572/VEKP-voortgangsrapportering_2022_sriiql.pdf)

3. POLICY AND APPROACH FOR THE MAIN ECONOMIC, LABOUR MARKET AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

3.0. Introduction

The **ES 2022** had a more ‘traditional’ format again, which is also the case for the ES 2023. Like the 2022 Country Report, the current Country Report is again part of the Spring Package. The implementation of the recovery and resilience plan/RRP (Plan voor Herstel en Veerkracht/PHV) also remains an important component of the ES.

In 2022²³, Belgium received **4 CSRs**, which relate to budget (CSR 1), the implementation of the RRP and the submission of the 2021-2027 cohesion policy programming documents (CSR 2), labour market and education (CSR 3) and energy and climate challenges (CSR 4). Chapters 3.1. through 3.6 of this section mainly focus on the **CSRs 2022** (see table below). The CSRs 2019²⁴, 2020²⁵ and 2021²⁶ are also discussed whenever relevant.

CSR 2022	FRP 2023
1. In 2023, ensure prudent fiscal policy, in particular by limiting the growth of nationally-financed current expenditure below medium-term potential output growth, taking into account continued temporary and targeted support to households and firms most vulnerable to energy price hikes and to people fleeing Ukraine. Stand ready to adjust current spending to the evolving situation. Expand public investment for the green and digital transition and for energy security, including by making use of the RRF, RePowerEU and other EU funds. For the period beyond 2023, pursue a fiscal policy aimed at achieving prudent medium-term fiscal positions and ensuring credible and gradual debt reduction and fiscal sustainability in the medium term through gradual consolidation, investment and reforms. Prioritise reforms to improve the fiscal sustainability of long-term care, including by promoting a cost efficient use of the different care settings. Reform the taxation and benefit systems to reduce disincentives to work by shifting the tax burden away from labour and by simplifying the tax and benefit system. Reduce tax expenditures and make the tax system more investment-neutral.	Chapter 3.1. Chapters 3.3. and 3.4.
2. Proceed with the implementation of its recovery and resilience plan, in line with the milestones and targets included in the Council Implementing Decision of 13 July 2021. Submit the 2021-2027 cohesion policy programming documents with a view to finalising their negotiations with the Commission and subsequently starting their implementation.	Chapters 3.1 through 3.4 Part 5
3. Address labour shortages and skills mismatches, notably by improving the performance and inclusiveness of the education and training system, enhancing the quality and labour market relevance of the vocational education and training and developing more flexible and attractive career paths and training for teachers.	Chapter 3.2.
4. Reduce overall reliance on fossil fuels by stepping up energy efficiency improvements and the reduction of fossil fuel use in buildings, promoting the use and supply of public transport and accelerating the deployment of renewable energies and related grid infrastructure by further streamlining the permitting procedures including by reducing the length of appeal procedures and adopting framework conditions to boost investments in solar energy installations.	Chapter 3.4.

A state of play of Flanders’ investments and reforms under the NRRP²⁷ is included again. The Flemish authorities are closely monitoring the implementation of Flanders’ projects under the NRRP through the Group of Managers in which the policy areas involved are represented.

²³ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0901\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0901(01)&from=EN)

²⁴ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:JOC_2019_301_R_0001

²⁵ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H0826\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H0826(01)&from=EN)

²⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2021:304:FULL&from=EN>

²⁷ Flanders’ investments (I) and reforms (R) in the NRRP are the following: Improved energy subsidy scheme (including investment component), Renovation of social housing (I), Renovation of public buildings (I), An industrial value chain for the hydrogen economy (I), Renewable heat networks (I), Ecological defragmentation (I), Blue Deal (I), Digitalisation of the Flemish public sector (I), Cycling infrastructure (I), Charging infrastructure (I), Greening of the bus fleet (I), Promotion of zero-emission transport (R), Emissions fraud (R), Digisprong/Digital Leap (R + I), Higher Education Advancement Fund (R + I), An inclusive labour market (R), Digibanks (I), Learning and career offensive (R), Digital skills (I), Lifelong learning (R), Strengthening of R&D (I), Optimisation of procedures: Faster permit and appeal procedures (R), Broadening of the innovation base (R), Circular Flanders Governance (R), Recycling Hub (I), Circular construction and manufacturing industry (I) Expenditure reviews - The Flemish Broad Review and expenditure benchmark of Flanders (R)

The Flanders Chancellery and Foreign Office (Departement Kanselarij en Buitenlandse Zaken/DKBUZA) and the Department of Finance and Budget (Departement Financiën en Begroting/DFB), which are also members of the inter-federal NRRP surveillance committee, take up important coordinating activities at the Flemish level.

The measures included in the FRP 2023 focus greatly on the **SDGs**²⁸. Moreover, the measures regarding labour market and education (3.3.) and social cohesion (3.6) place strong emphasis on the EPSR²⁹ and the **employment guidelines**³⁰ of the Member States, as well as contribute substantially to the achievement of the EU 2030 targets regarding employment, skills and social protection. The FRP 2023 also responds to the four dimensions of competitive sustainability of the **Annual Sustainable Growth Survey (ASGS) 2023**³¹, i.e. environmental sustainability, productivity, fairness and macroeconomic stability.

The ES is characterised by intense consultation between the EC and Belgium, both in terms of the NRRP and the monitoring of other ES elements. Flanders took active part again in the **Fact Finding Mission (FFM)** on 14 December 2022 between the EC services and Belgium, and provided the necessary input for this, which will be important in the context of the EC's (draft) Country Report Belgium 2023³².

3.1. Budget

3.1.1. Sound public finances

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has a strong impact on the European and Flemish economies: a negative supply shock has led to soaring energy prices, causing inflation to rise much faster than expected. In addition, economic growth in the euro area is lower than expected. These developments also have an impact on Flanders' budget.

Net borrowing on Flanders' budget is estimated at €2.9 billion in 2023 and is heading towards €409 million in 2027. This includes the construction costs for the Oosterweel link and the Flemish Resilience Recovery Plan.

We provide a significant additional investment impulse through Oosterweel and the Recovery Plan, which we do not include in the assessment against our budgetary objective. This additional spending is intended to sustainably increase the productivity and competitiveness of Flanders' economy.

Financing balance Budget preparation (Begrotingsopmaak/BO) 2023 (in thousand euros)

	BO 2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Financing balance	-2,921,821	-1,928,517	-1,823,890	-984,760	-408,501
Corrections for assessment against budgetary objective	978,829	871,877	654,075	533,590	424,150
Balance after corrections for assessment against budgetary objective	-1,942,885	-1,056,640	-1,169,815	-451,170	15,649

Source: multi-year estimate 2022-2027 for the 2023 budget preparation including amendments

Budgeting is about making choices and setting priorities. This is no easy task because the budgetary challenges are many.

As Government of Flanders, we once more choose to put our weight behind society and businesses in this crisis. This means that we are registering a Ukraine Emergency Fund under BO2023 again and are making efforts to help citizens and sound businesses in Flanders cope with the energy crisis as well as possible. Nevertheless, the Government of Flanders resolutely opts to keep public finances sound and strengthen

²⁸ The **17 SDGs**: 1. No poverty, 2. Zero hunger, 3. Good health and well-being, 4. Quality education, 5. Gender equality, 6. Clean water and sanitation, 7. Affordable and clean energy, 8. Decent work and economic growth, 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10. Reduce inequalities, 11. Sustainable cities and communities, 12. Responsible consumption and production, 13. Climate action, 14. Life below water, 15. Life on land, 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions, 17. Partnerships for the goals.

²⁹ The **20 EPSR principles**: 1. Education, training and lifelong learning, 2. Gender equality, 3. Equal opportunities, 4. Active support to employment, 5. Secure and adaptable employment, 6. Wages, 7. Information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals, 8. Social dialogue and involvement of workers, 9. Work-life balance, 10. Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection, 11. Childcare and support to children, 12. Social protection, 13. Unemployment benefits, 14. Minimum income, 15. Old age income and pensions, 16. Health care, 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities, 18. Long-term care, 19. Housing and assistance for the homeless, 20. Access to essential services.

³⁰ The **four employment guidelines**. Guideline 5: Boosting the demand for labour; Guideline 6: Enhancing labour supply and improving access to employment, skills and competences; Guideline 7: Enhancing the functioning of labour markets and the effectiveness of social dialogue; Guideline 8: Promoting equal opportunities for all, fostering social inclusion and combating poverty.

³¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0780&from=EN>

³² The final Country Report and the draft CSRs are expected to be delivered on 24 May 2023 as part of the Spring Package 2023.

structural growth in Flanders. A budgetary path was set out, with Flanders returning to a **balanced budget** (excluding the investment expenditure in the context of Oosterweel) **from 2027** onwards.

Meanwhile, the **VV Recovery Plan** totalling €4.3 billion is being implemented, including the 55 projects financed with European RRF funds³³. Despite the various COVID-19 waves and the Ukraine crisis, the implementation of the VV Recovery Plan is largely on schedule.

In 2022, the DFB took important steps towards the implementation of an **expenditure benchmark for Flanders**, thus giving concrete substance to one of the EU recommendations to strengthen Belgium's budgetary framework. The expenditure benchmark was anchored in Flemish legislation last year through an amendment to the Flemish Public Finance Code (Vlaamse Codex Overheidsfinanciën/VCO). It was, for the first time, applied in practice as a monitoring tool in the new 2022-2027 multi-year estimate. The expenditure benchmark is to ensure the sustainability of public finances in all circumstances, guarantee policy stability and discourage ad hoc adjustments. Using an expenditure benchmark also implies starting from medium-term targets in a multi-year perspective. The expenditure benchmark is reported at aggregated level in the multi-year estimate, which allows to build experience in benchmarking and to gain a better understanding of the expenditure dynamics of Flanders' budget in relation to revenue growth. The benchmark will be determined each time a new term of office starts.

In September 2022, the Government of Flanders launched the **grants register** (subsidieregister), a central database recording all grants allocated by the Flemish authorities. The register aims to increase transparency about grant flows in Flanders and should, in addition to raising awareness of grants, allow to more easily detect double subsidisation.

The measures described above contribute to **SDG 16**.

3.1.2. Flanders' contribution to the NRRP: the Flemish Broad Review (Vlaamse Brede Heroverweging/VBH)

To respond to the CSRs 2018 and 2019, the Government of Flanders initiated the Spending Reviews project, which is part of the VV Recovery Plan and the NRRP, which is financed with funds from the European RRF. This project continues work towards a **performance-informed budget**, as stated in the Flemish Coalition Agreement 2019-2024 (Vlaams Regeerakkoord 2019-2024).

In the first phase of the Spending Reviews project, the VBH³⁴ was launched in 2020 and 2021, which reviewed all expenditure items and, where relevant, cost recovery rates of the Flemish budget. The VBH has led to a number of concrete decisions in the 2022 budget preparation (BO) that should help to achieve a balanced budget from 2027 onwards.

The Government of Flanders then defined **nine themes** for a more in-depth spending review: (1) cultural superstructure, (2) higher education, (3) sustainable water use and the organisation of the water landscape, (4) housing policy instruments, (5), organisational structure of the Flemish authorities, (6) modal shift in Flanders, (7) Flemish productivity policy, (8) the integration of the three care budgets, and (9) (fiscal) support measures for households with children. A plan of action has been developed for the implementation of the spending review for almost every theme. The purpose of the spending reviews is to have the results taken into account at the latest when the next government is formed.

It is vital that the VBH and the spending reviews are not one-off or non-committal exercises but become a structural evaluation practice in Flanders. The spending reviews were defined and structurally embedded in Flanders' budgetary process through an amendment to the VCO, which was approved by the Flemish Parliament in June 2022 and ratified by the Government of Flanders in July 2022. At least one VBH will be carried out during each term of office. Following the formation of a government, an indicative schedule of spending reviews must from now on also be drawn up for the whole term of office. In addition, the Finance Inspectorate must henceforth pay specific attention to spending reviews and to what entities do with the results of these reviews in its advisory opinions on the budget preparation.

³³ By 31 December 2022, €4.08 billion or 95% of the €4.3 billion was committed.

³⁴ <https://fin.vlaanderen.be/de-vlaamse-brede-heroverweging-vbh/>

The measures described above contribute to **SDG 16**.

3.2. Labour market and education

3.2.1. Labour market

In 2022, the labour market in Flanders was historically tight. The Flemish labour market recovered relatively quickly from the COVID-19 crisis, and demand for labour rose sharply. In 2022, the Public Employment Service of Flanders (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding/VDAB) received a record number of vacancies, with a 31% increase compared to 2019. At the same time, businesses and organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to find people to fill these vacancies. In 2022, the VDAB reported 1.7 jobseekers in mediation per VDAB vacancy. Labour market tightness in Flanders manifests itself in almost all sectors and branches of activity. At the same time, there is still a large group of people in Flanders who do not or cannot actively participate in the labour market. The share of economically inactive people is 22% among the 20-64 age group. The Government of Flanders wants to turn the tightness into opportunities for economically inactive people and jobseekers so as to continue to work towards its 80% employment rate target.

The Government of Flanders and the Flemish social partners have joined forces to tackle the structural challenges on the Flemish labour market. In July 2022, they concluded the **employment agreement ‘Everyone Needed, Everyone Included’** (iedereen nodig, iedereen mee). Through this new employment agreement, Flanders is also pushing for more workable jobs (‘workable work’) to help enable sustainable careers for people already in work. Finally, through the actions stated in ‘Everyone Needed, Everyone Included’, the Government of Flanders and the social partners want to encourage more people to engage in lifelong learning in line with the EPSR principle ‘Education, training and life-long learning’.

3.2.1.1. More people in work

The **‘Everyone Needed, Everyone Included’** employment agreement puts forward four pillars with solutions to address the shortages and mismatches and to move towards more sustainable employment and a more inclusive labour market. Flanders aims to continue the development of a (1) a **result-oriented activation policy** and to commit to (2) a **rigorous training policy**. The employment agreement encourages a stronger commitment to (3) **workable work**, and the fourth pillar seeks to (4) better flesh out the opportunities of **interregional mobility and economic migration**. Focusing on these four pillars should make it possible to work towards the EU 2030 targets. Flanders continues to engage in dialogue with the federal government to align policies more closely with the different needs of the Regions and Communities. The Government of Flanders and the social partners see opportunities for this through asymmetric policies, the implementation of which is being explored.

The Flemish Minister for Work and Social Economy and the Government of Flanders are strengthening the provision of **job coaching** after recruitment. By offering quality job coaching in the workplace, the VDAB and its partners seek to increase the chances of sustainable employment for recently hired people, especially when there is a certain mismatch between the skills required for a job and the profile of the recruited employee. As an accompanying measure, the Government of Flanders will introduce, from October 2023 onwards, a **NSSO rebate for people without recent, sustainable work experience**. This will encourage employers to hire someone who has been unemployed or not professionally active in the labour market for at least two years. As such, the Government of Flanders is also turning its attention to the large labour potential among the group of economically inactive people.

To get and keep more people in work, the Government of Flanders introduced the **job bonus** (jobbonus). The Flemish job bonus aims to make work pay by increasing the financial difference between being in and out of work for low labour incomes. In late 2022, the first people in Flanders received a job bonus; by the end of January 2023, the number of job bonuses awarded exceeded 580,000. The Government of Flanders decided to award a one-off top-up of €100 per person to the first payment of the job bonus. From 2023 onwards, the job bonus will be extended to a higher wage bracket up to €2,900 gross because of the inflation in (minimum) wages.

To meet its target of getting 120,000 people into work by the end of its term of office (2024), the Government of Flanders is committed to successfully and sustainably reintegrating more **people with long-term ill health** into the labour market. The VDAB has renewed the framework agreement in the context of pathways to work for people recognised as incapacitated for work with the National Institute for Sickness and Invalidity Insurance (Rijksinstituut voor Ziekte- en Invaliditeitsverzekering/RIZIV) and the health insurance funds. This agreement contains even stronger ambitions for the reintegration of people with long-term ill health. The VDAB, RIZIV and health insurance funds are committed to increasing and speeding up the referral of people with long-term ill health. In the shorter term, Flanders' ambition is to move towards 10,000 new reintegration pathways in 2023 and 12,000 in 2024. In this way, the partners in the agreement also aspire to increase the outflow to work from 30% to 35% with a long-term growth path to 40%.

On 1 July 2023, the Government of Flanders will introduce **individual adapted work** (individueel maatwerk). The employment rate of people with a work-limiting disability, disorder or illness rose by 11 percentage points to 49% over the past decade (see also 2.2.). Although this is better than the European average, the gap with the overall population in Flanders remains large. This reform enhances cohesion and interaction between the social and mainstream economies and encourages businesses to employ more people with health conditions and/or occupational disabilities. People who need guidance can receive support from a qualified mentor and coach. As such, individual adapted work creates opportunities for both people with health conditions/occupational disabilities and businesses. By realising individual adapted work, Flanders is taking a step towards creating a more inclusive labour market.

In light of the labour market tightness, the VDAB is working to **accelerate its digital contact strategy**. This measure, which is part of the 'Everyone Needed, Everyone Included' employment agreement, is designed to reach new jobseekers more quickly and provide them with tailored support. New jobseekers whose self-reliance is assessed to be low or difficult receive a (face-to-face) mediation interview two weeks after their assessment. To better reach jobseekers and economically inactive people, Flanders is also committed to **strengthening cooperation with local authorities**. Flanders extends the **coordinating role** of local authorities to **work**. Local authorities can offer more customisation in a broader activation policy and respond to local individuality. One of the policy priorities in this context is to remove barriers for people who are distant from the labour market in the mainstream and social economies, inter alia through the schemes 'neighbourhood work' (wijk-werken), 'temporary work experience' (tijdelijke werkervaring) and 'community service' (gemeenschapsdienst) for long-term jobseekers. Another priority is (continued) cooperation with the VDAB and other local actors. At the end of 2022, the 13 centre cities and 33 of the 37 social economy and employment catchment areas were covered by a cooperation agreement with the VDAB. Through this agreement, 75% of local authorities in Flanders undertake to work out actions together with the VDAB (and partners) towards reaching the 80% employment rate target. For this reason, the theme of the 2023 Employment Conference will be local labour market policies.

Some businesses also attract foreign talent to remedy labour shortages. Economic migration offers opportunities, but people with temporary legal or illegal status are vulnerable to abuse, poor working conditions and illegal employment. Flanders is tightening the provision on **chain liability** to counter schemes intended to place the responsibility for the correct employment of foreign workers solely with subcontractors. As a result, businesses will from now on be expected to carry out due diligence checks when hiring subcontractors. As an accompanying measure, Flanders is also working on legislation that imposes more severe sanctions for **illegal employment**.

The measures described above contribute to **EPSR principles 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13 and 17**, to **SDGs 1, 8 and 10**, and to **employment guidelines 5, 6, 7 and 8**.

3.2.1.2. Training and career

The Government of Flanders wants to make Flanders a learning Flanders and is determined to increase training participation, which is also in line with the EU 2030 target regarding lifelong learning (see also 2.3.). Flanders continues to work on a permanent learning culture, including through the previously launched Lifelong

Learning Action Plan (Actieplan Levenslang Leren) within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Partnership (Partnerschap Levenslang Leren).

The workplace is a strong learning environment. Flanders is reforming the incentives for **work-based learning** to a clearer and simpler framework. By introducing the premium for work-based learning leading to qualifications (kwalificerend werkplekleren), the Government of Flanders is encouraging companies to offer quality learning workplaces that lead to an educational or vocational qualification. Through the new pupil premium for dual learning (leerlingenpremie alternerende opleiding), Flanders is encouraging pupils in dual and alternance learning in secondary education to complete their education trajectory successfully.

Sectors are structural partners in Flanders' labour market policy. Through the new generation of **sector covenants**, the Government of Flanders is creating the framework for continued cooperation. The sectors play an important role: through the sector covenants, they undertake to support sustainable careers of individuals, while focussing on the themes 'better match between education and labour market', 'lifelong learning' and 'competence policy', and from 2023 also increasingly on '(lateral) entry', 'progression' and 'retention', among other things. By introducing intersectoral covenants, Flanders is shifting up a gear in terms of intersectoral cooperation: many sectors face the same major challenges such as lifelong learning, diversity and inclusion, the digital transition and labour shortages. The sectors are developing sector-specific approaches to these themes through the addenda on **dual learning, Ukraine, and diversity and inclusion**.

Flanders is investing in the development of an integrated **labour market forecast model** for competencies. The labour market in Flanders is always changing. This macro-forecast model is to capture future labour supply and demand at the level of sectors, occupations and competencies. This will allow the Flemish labour market policy to respond more proactively to future potential skills mismatches. Training is the key to remedying already existing skills mismatches. That is why the VDAB is launching a **financial incentive** for people who have been inactive in the labour market for more than two years, are **not entitled to benefits** and are following **training in a shortage occupation** (knelpuntopleiding). Guiding economically inactive people to shortage occupations serves the dual purpose of increasing the employment rate and filling more vacancies in these shortage occupations.

The measures described above contribute to **EPSR principles 1, 2, 3, 4 and 13**, to **SDGs 4, 8 and 10** and to **employment guidelines 6, 7 and 8**.

3.2.1.3. Flanders' contribution to the NRRP: an inclusive labour market, the learning and career offensive, lifelong learning (LLL) and digibanks

The Government of Flanders wants to reduce the risk of digital exclusion within the framework of the NRRP. Vulnerable citizens can turn to the **digibanks** (digibanken) to borrow hardware, attend easily accessible training courses on specific digital skills and receive support in the use of online services. Strengthening basic digital skills can play an important role in labour market activation. In late 2022, following five calls, the number of municipalities participating in the digibank project approximated to 219, and 54 digibanks were being set up.

Today, various support instruments are in place in Flanders for workers who want to follow training, depending on status, educational attainment level, etc. Flanders is developing the individual **learning and career account** (leer- en loopbaanrekening) in line with recommendations from the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). Apart from building a learning culture, Flanders also wants to centre focus on the individual and encourage workers to take control of their own careers and to follow training. Following the approval of the Vision Paper 'Towards a Learning and Career Account in Flanders' (Visienota 'Naar een leer- en loopbaanrekening in Vlaanderen') by the Government of Flanders, possible avenues are currently being further explored at policy and operational level. The personalised digital overview of training incentives in Flanders is expected to be launched in 2023 through 'My Citizen Profile' (Mijn Burgerprofiel).

Many actions from the learning and career offensive were included in the NRRP, such as the joint right of initiative (gemeenschappelijk initiatiefrecht) under the Flemish training leave (Vlaams opleidingsverlof/VOV),

the VDAB's online training provision and the development of competency assessments (competentiecheck). The focus is on raising the training participation rate. In the context of the 'Everyone Needed, Everyone Included' employment agreement, the experiment with the **joint right of initiative** under the Flemish training leave has also been set up for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. This joint right of initiative stipulates that employees who follow their own training choice as well as accept a proposal from the employer, are entitled to twice the number of VOV hours (from 125 to 250 hours per year). For the 2021-2022 school year, 46% of applications concerned training followed at the employer's suggestion. The VDAB has also expanded its **online training offer**. It recorded 291,191 enrolments for online learning modules between January 2021 and June 2022. Flanders wants to use **competency assessments** to strengthen the resilience of businesses, teach them how to cope with change and make them more resilient to economic shocks. This gives businesses greater insight into existing and required competencies, enabling them to facilitate targeted training and career pathways. By concentrating competency assessments for employers on businesses with fewer than 250 employees, Flanders is also reaching small (more vulnerable) businesses that often devote less or no attention to training and transitions.

The measures described above contribute to **EPSR principles 1, 3, 4, 13 and 20**, to **SDGs 4, 8 and 10** and to **employment guidelines 6, 7 and 8**.

3.2.2. Education

3.2.2.1. Improving performance and inclusion in the education and training system

(a) Monitoring quality through standardised, validated and benchmarked tests (Flemish tests)

Surveys and international comparative research show that the results for certain subjects, such as mathematics, science and reading comprehension, have been worsening for several years now. For this reason, primary and secondary schools will be taking the **first Flemish tests** from the 2023-2024 school year onwards. The Flemish tests are tests that have been **standardised, benchmarked and validated across networks and umbrella organisations**, with the primary goal of supporting schools' internal quality assurance process and subsequently helping to improve educational quality. It is an instrument for achieving the attainment targets (minimumdoelen) and measuring learning gains. This knowledge, in turn, contributes to supporting the internal quality assurance process of schools, the external quality control by the inspectorate and the support provided to schools by the pedagogical support services and other external partners that support schools, as well as to monitoring the attainment of educational goals by pupils at system level. The tests are organised centrally, taken digitally and subsequently processed and analysed. They are limited initially to Dutch (reading comprehension, writing, grammar) and mathematics.

(b) Learning Support Decree

The Government of Flanders replaces the M-decree for pupils with special educational needs with the **Learning Support Decree (decreet leersteun)**. This decree outlines a new model for supporting pupils with special educational needs in mainstream education: the learning support model (leersteunmodel). The Learning Support Decree and the learning support model will enter into force on 1 September 2023. Preparations for this are being made during the 2022-2023 school year. It is the Government of Flanders' ambition to make sure that **all pupils can develop to their fullest potential with maximum learning gains**. The decree raises the quality of education and guarantees workability for schools and teachers. The focus is on strengthening mainstream education, learning support and special educational needs education. The Government of Flanders aims for:

- strong basic care and enhanced care in mainstream education
- a sustainable learning support model with appropriate working conditions for support staff
- a fully-fledged position and increased quality for special educational needs education.

(c) Leerpunt

To **strengthen teachers/teacher teams to achieve educational quality and remedy learning losses**, the Government of Flanders has given its approval to the establishment and core remit of the private **foundation 'Leerpunt'**. Leerpunt will, inter alia, develop an independent, accessible and evidence informed knowledge base on what works in terms of didactic skills, taking into account diverse contexts and teaching aids. It will

then translate this knowledge base to Flemish classroom and school practice to support teachers in their daily classroom practice.

In implementation of the VV Recovery Plan, the Government of Flanders has decided to additionally invest in strengthening broad basic care and increased care in schools for mainstream primary and secondary education by allocating a grant of €6 million to the private foundation 'Leerpunt'. A key focal point here is to reduce the learning loss of all learners, and in particular of pupils in vulnerable positions. 'Leerpunt' is to strengthen the teaching skills of teachers/teacher teams in the classroom with the aim of reducing learning losses.

The measures described above contribute to **EPSR principles 1, 2, 3 and 17**, to **SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10** and to **employment guidelines 6 and 8**.

3.2.2.2 Improving the quality and labour market relevance of vocational education and training

(a) The STEM agenda

The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (**STEM**) **Agenda 2030** was published by the Government of Flanders in June 2021 and focuses on **increasing enrolment in STEM courses and careers, on STEM specialists and on the general strengthening of STEM competencies** in broader society: 'STEM literacy'. This initiative is intended to promote vocational education and training (VET) and lifelong learning, but also enhances key competencies in VET.

The core indicators for the STEM Agenda 2030 of the Flemish Departments of Economy, Science and Innovation (Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie/EWI) and Work and Social Economy (Werk en Sociale Economie/WSE) are under development. Five (new) indicators have been determined for the Department of Education and Training (Onderwijs en Vorming/OV). These five indicators are: (i) STEM girls in technical secondary education (technisch secundair onderwijs/TSO) and vocational secondary education (beroepssecundair onderwijs/BSO): as a sub-indicator in the share of STEM pupils in secondary education (secundair onderwijs/SO), (ii) share of STEM in dual learning (new indicator), (iii) STEM attainment in SO (new indicator), (iv) STEM attainment in higher education and (v) STEM in adult education. In addition, the targets are coordinated with the advisory councils of the aforementioned other Flemish STEM departments. The targets to the indicators of the Department OV will be finalised by mid-2023.

(b) Recovery Plan 'From Vulnerable to Resilient'

The **Recovery Plan 'From Vulnerable to Resilient'** (Van kwetsbaar naar weerbaar) was developed in the context of the Flemish Resilience (VV) Recovery Plan. The plan devotes special attention to **infrastructure for technical and vocational education**. It includes a study on good practices. The results of the study will be compiled into a small professional development programme for teachers, aimed at integrating effective pedagogical/didactic principles into their teaching. The goal is to develop a website by April 2024 with a digital toolkit that will include inspiring examples, lesson recordings, practical materials and resources, such as observation tools and viewing guides (kijkwijzers). The plan also encompasses additional information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and eXtended Reality (XR) material to promote digitalisation.

Finally, **regional technological centres (RTCs)** ensure **a better alignment between education and training on the one hand, and innovative challenges and labour market needs on the other**. To this end, the various RTC partners from the education and employment sectors join forces, for instance to share infrastructure and for purposes of the XR hardware loan service.

(c) Modernisation of vocational education and training

Secondary education (secundair onderwijs/SO), including labour market-oriented education, is since recently being **modernised** in Flanders. Specifically, the orientation function of the first stage of SO is being strengthened, new clear attainment targets have been put in place for the second and third stages of secondary education, and the new classification of courses ensures a more rational and transparent provision. The attainment targets are yet to be finally approved by the Flemish Parliament.

SO courses are periodically screened (on a decree basis) for their relevance and topicality with a view to making any adjustments to the provision. During this screening it is assessed whether the objectives of the modernisation of SO are being achieved. We are currently in the first phase, after which we will examine the roll-out of the modernisation in the second and third stages. For the labour market-oriented (and double purpose) courses in the third stage, we will examine, inter alia, the extent to which they match or meet the (forecasted) labour market needs (cf Decree on Modernisation of SO).

All programmes will be reviewed every five school years at the latest. If necessary, adjustments will be made. Educational objectives will also be periodically reviewed for their topicality to keep them in line with society's challenges and expectations.

The modernisation of the vocational education provision combined with proper screening should improve the quality of programmes and enhance their attractiveness.

(d) Dual learning

A better **match between education and the labour market** is being aimed at through the **dual learning** system (in continuing education, special educational needs education and adult education). Through dual learning, pupils acquire knowledge and skills in a school, a part-time education centre or a Syntra training centre as well as in the workplace. Pupils who have passed the training course receive a diploma or certificate of the course. Dual learning was introduced in 2018 following the adoption of the Decree on the legal framework for the introduction of dual learning in secondary education. On 1 September 2022, 119 different courses were offered 764 times in various sectors in Flanders, such as 'care', 'technology', 'hospitality' and 'construction'. This is an increase compared to 2021, when 89 different courses were offered 596 times. The most popular dual courses among pupils in the 2021-2022 school year were 'Carer' (Verzorgende/Zorgkundige) (145 enrolments), Hair Care (Haarverzorging) (131 enrolments) and Electrical Installations (Elektrische Installaties) (130 enrolments). Training providers and sector organisations are putting their weight behind dual learning in 19 sectoral partnerships, with the aim of establishing a broad qualitative network of learning enterprises. In addition, ten projects are currently running under the European Social Fund (ESF) call 'Impetus to Dual Learning' (Impuls Duaal Leren).

Meanwhile, the roll-out of dual learning in higher and adult education has started. In **September 2022, dual learning was introduced in formal adult education**. It is the Government of Flanders' ambition to intensify and increase the share of work-based learning in higher education and the formal adult education programmes in order to close the gap between education and the labour market. Opportunities for dual learning are also being explored for **higher education** through **pilot projects**. Fourteen ESF projects are running from April 2021 to June 2023 in educational institutions (ten university colleges and four adult education centres (centra voor volwassenenonderwijs/CVOs)) to initiate dual learning living labs, create visions and develop broadening strategies. The introduction of dual learning in higher education will depend on the results of the ongoing pilot projects.

(e) Innovation

The labour market is changing rapidly and constantly. New skills are needed, which is why vocational training courses must remain up-to-date and continue to be innovative. For this reason, the Government of Flanders supports **initiatives that focus on innovation in vocational education and training**, aiming for a VET system that prepares for the labour market. In addition, initiatives **to train, retrain and upskill adult workers and jobseekers** are appreciated.

Several initiatives are being taken to modernise vocational training provision and incorporate innovation into vocational training programmes. Examples include innovative programmes in vocational education and training (InnoVET) and Edusprong (plan for qualitatively enhanced adult education, part of the VV Recovery Plan).

(f) Validation of non-formal and informal learning and vocational training courses

In Flanders, there are two types of **pathways to obtain a vocational qualification** (outside formal education): the validation of non-formal and informal learning (validatie van niet-formeel en informeel leren/VNIL) and vocational training courses.

The goal of VNIL is to assist individuals in their personal development, increase employment rates, improve access to formal education systems and promote lifelong learning. Various vocational qualifications can be acquired through the validation of non-formal or informal learning. In Flanders, the term 'Recognition of Prior Learning' (RPL) is used for the validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Vocational training courses also lead to vocational qualifications and are not organised by formal education, but for instance by the VDAB.

To ensure the quality of both pathways (VNIL and vocational training courses), a **joint quality framework and neutral and independent quality monitoring** have been introduced. The vocational qualifications constitute the joint reference framework. They are also a tool for shaping the provision.

Nevertheless, **actions are being launched to promote this way of acquiring qualifications** and to make clear how it can help adults in lifelong learning and in creating opportunities, both in their personal lives and on the labour market. These actions and activities include:

- (i) a new website on RPL
- (ii) several vocational qualification validation standards have already been developed for the VNIL and more will follow
- (iii) several vocational training courses have already been recognised; the idea is to expand this provision
- (iv) within the Learning At Home (LEAH) initiative, seven adult education centres (all situated within Catholic Education Flanders/Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen) grouped together distance learning programmes on an online learning platform, with the aim of appealing to new target groups.

(g) Validation of qualifications and the national qualifications framework

All **vocational training courses** (whether in continuing education, special educational needs education, pre-university education or higher vocational education) are **based on vocational qualifications**. Vocational qualifications are written by representatives of the labour market and outline the competencies that exist in the labour market. By **coupling vocational qualifications to training programmes**, the competencies of vocational qualifications also serve as learning outcomes for these training programmes. As a result, vocational training courses **closely match jobs in the labour market**. Vocational qualifications also consider findings from research on competence forecasting. Students are therefore not only prepared for a smooth transition to the labour market, but also for sustainable employment. Another possibility is to update vocational qualifications. In addition, vocational qualifications are also used in the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and the validation of informal and non-formal learning, both within and outside education (cf RPL scheme and Decree on the Joint Quality Framework (Gemeenschappelijk kwaliteitskader/GKK). Training programme providers outside education (e.g. the VDAB, businesses, etc.) also base their training programmes on vocational qualifications.

To make this framework fully operational, **actions are being taken and procedures are being put in place to keep qualifications up-to-date and to establish new skills immediately**. The following actions deserve specific mention in this context:

- The Database of Qualifications and Professional Experience Attestations (Leer- en Ervaringsbewijzendatabank/LED) collects data on qualification certificates (diplomas/degrees, certificates, professional experience certificates, etc.). It provides clarity on the authenticity of qualifications and makes the data easily accessible.
- Procedures have been put in place for both the development and update of educational and vocational qualifications. There is a need not only to establish new occupations or courses, but also to monitor the current provision and adapt it whenever necessary.
- In Flanders, a Green Skills Roadmap is being drawn up with European support. Stakeholders, including education actors, are being involved in this to the maximum extent. The project should identify the main options to overcome the key bottlenecks that hold back the transition to a green economy in Flanders.

The measures described above contribute to **EPSR principles 1, 2, 3 and 17**, to **SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10** and to **employment guidelines 6 and 8**.

3.2.2.3 Developing more flexible and more attractive career paths and training programmes for teachers

(a) Teaching profession

The Government of Flanders adopted a concept paper on the **reevaluation of the teaching profession** in December 2021 that contains a series of measures to make the profession more attractive in the short and medium term and to address teacher shortages. The measures set out in this concept paper are designed to attract teachers to our education system - both new recruits and those entering the profession at a later stage - as well as to ensure that those already working in education are retained.

A first set of short-term measures entered into effect in the 2021-2022 school year. Medium-term measures - phase 2 of the concept paper on reevaluation - are planned for the 2023-2024 school year. On 10 March 2023, the preliminary draft decree implementing measures regarding the teaching profession was approved. As this is a preliminary draft, measures 3 to 6 listed below are yet to be negotiated with the social partners. If there is sufficient support, the measures (most of which are in fact temporary in nature as they specifically address current teacher shortages) will be introduced. *Firstly*, Flanders has removed a **financial barrier for lateral entrants** wanting to go into teaching. Previous private experience can be validated, which means that up to ten years of pecuniary seniority can be given, so they do not have to start on an entry-level salary. *Secondly*, **from this school year**, schools in **primary and secondary education** can **convert up to 20% of their teaching support in case of an identified teacher shortage in order to appoint other profiles** who can subsequently support teachers in the classroom. *Thirdly*, the decree provides the possibility for school management teams in primary and secondary education, in schools that cannot fill one or more teaching assignments with a statutory appointment due to the acute teacher shortage, to have these assignments carried out through a **service contract**. *Fourthly*, a **relaxation of the teacher-in-training (LIO/leraar-in-opleiding) job** will be made possible so that more prospective teachers take advantage of it and can already effectively take up a teaching assignment as a practical part of their teacher training. *Fifthly*, a **mandate of expert teacher** is being introduced in secondary education to break through the linear career path for teachers. *Sixthly*, the **selection post of deputy headmaster** is being introduced in primary education.

The **teacher bonus** (lerarenbonus) was introduced, which entitles primary and secondary school staff who do not yet hold a teaching certificate and are following teacher training in addition to their teaching assignments to a weekly reduction of these assignments. Staff members retain their salary for the original assignment and are given more time for the teacher training due to the reduced teaching assignment.

The **communication campaign 'Giving Your All as a Teacher'** (Lesgeven is alles geven) has been launched in March 2022. It runs over several years and is backed by all stakeholders. It is aimed at the societal reevaluation of teachers and seeks to attract new students to teacher training as well as to guide lateral entrants to education. All these actions are having an effect, which shows from the spectacular rise in lateral entrants. Last school year, for instance, 4,500 people made the switch from the private sector to education, which is a 50% increase.

Moreover, as part of this campaign, a **Schools Open Day** will be organised on Friday 12 May. Participating schools will open their doors that day to anyone considering or already preparing for a switch to education. It gives potential teachers a taste of the teaching profession by attending lessons or a subject meeting, supervising, discussing or lending a hand ... and, in between, asking experienced teachers questions about what teaching really entails. During the Schools Open Day, teacher training students can soak up the atmosphere at their possible future employer. Final-year pupils interested in teacher training can also participate. This day is definitely interesting for prospective lateral entrants.

To convince even more people to choose a job in education, the Minister for Education has appointed an **education ambassador**. The education ambassador (onderwijsambassadeur) will do as much fieldwork as possible by visiting schools and telling inspiring stories that can motivate others to choose this profession of

great societal value. They will, for instance, enthuse 6th-year pupils about teacher training and promote the teacher bonus to final-year bachelor's and master's students.

(b) Committee of Wise Men

The Minister for Education has established a **committee of experts (Commissie van Wijzen)** to identify and develop long-term measures. Based on an analysis of the initial situation, the committee of experts will draw up a blueprint for a **modern personnel, professionalisation and school organisation policy within education, including the possibilities in the areas of digitalisation and dual learning**. Starting from an environmental analysis, this committee will arrive at a blueprint for a modern personnel, HR and school organisation policy within education, including the attraction and retention of talents and the promotion of cooperation and differentiation between teachers and within teams.

The measures described above contribute to **EPSR principle 1**, to **SDGs 4 and 10** and to **Employment Guideline 6**.

3.2.2.4. Flanders' contribution to the NRRP: Advancement Fund and Digital Leap

(a) Advancement Fund

In implementation of the VV Recovery Plan, the Government of Flanders approved, on 26 February 2021, the draft vision paper **Higher Education Advancement Fund** (Voorsprongfonds hoger onderwijs) for the education leg. The Advancement Fund will make our higher education stronger, more flexible and more digital. We start from the opportunities that present themselves post COVID-19 and at the same time tackle structural challenges. We aim for **innovations that give higher education a stronger focus on the labour market, society and lifelong learning** as well as a 21st century digital character. Flexibility, innovation and sustainability are paramount. The Government of Flanders initiated the allocation of project grants to the projects carried out by higher education institutions through the 26 November 2021 Government of Flanders Order on the allocation of project grants in the context of the Advancement Fund, in implementation of the VV Recovery Plan (VV112), as amended on 17 December 2021. Project implementation continues in 2022. Preparations were started in summer 2022 for launching a vision pathway that was included as a milestone, viz. a vision for lifelong learning in higher education.

(b) Digital Leap

Since 1 September 2021, **innovations** are being introduced to the **job of ICT coordinator**. A job profile for ICT coordinators was drawn up and a support project is currently running for a more team-oriented ICT operation at school level. A 'policy planner' (beleidsplanner) was launched to further support schools. This tool allows schools to draw up a targeted ICT policy plan or improve an existing ICT plan based on their own vision.

Work was started on the development of a **single sign-on** that was named **LearningID** (LeerID). This LearningID should enable education professionals and pupils to log on only once, after which automatic access is granted to all kinds of digital applications and learning resources. It was launched in August 2022. Digital learning resources were supported with additional grants. Extra recovery funds were provided to add more functionalities to the 'Archive for Education' (Archief voor Onderwijs), as well as to the Smart Education@Schools learning resources project to make existing projects more sustainable. The planned evaluation study of I-Learn has been delivered and released.

Meanwhile, work has also been done on the **training pillar of the Digital Leap** (Digisprong). Schools received additional **ICT in-service training resources** in 2022 (these resources were pooled from the Digital Leap and Educational Leap (Edusprong) plans). A public tender was also launched to **organise an additional training provision** (boot camps) for primary education and for the professionalisation of ICT coordinators. The boot camps were awarded in January 2023. The Digital Leap Knowledge Centre (Kenniscentrum Digisprong) launched 'Digisnap', a tool for teachers and school teams to map their digital skills. Digisnap is also linked to a new (ICT) training database.

The **Digital Leap Knowledge Centre** has several duties in rolling out the Digital Leap Action Plan (actieplan Digisprong). It **supports schools** by means of advisory opinions, inspiration guides, practical tips and roadmaps

in areas such as distance learning and remote digital assessments. Several inspiration guides and advisory opinions were published on, inter alia, fiscal aspects of infrastructure grants, privacy, sustainability and a mobile device purchasing guide.

The measures described above contribute to **EPSR principles 1, 2, 3 and 17**, to **SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8 and 10** and to **employment guidelines 6 and 8**.

3.3. Entrepreneurship, competition, digitalisation and innovation

3.3.1. Entrepreneurship and competition

3.3.1.1. Entrepreneurship and competition measures

(a) Entrepreneurship

In terms of economy and entrepreneurship, these past years have been dedicated to **supporting the economy and preventing sound businesses from going bankrupt** due to the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, the energy crisis and the Ukraine crisis, and to supporting a successful relaunch. To this end, Flanders has developed several easily accessible support instruments with the aim of boosting the liquidity of affected businesses. The Flemish authorities are earmarking a total of €250 million in support to **compensate the energy costs of businesses** that were severely affected by the soaring energy prices in the fourth quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023. This support serves to strengthen the liquidity of businesses and offer them continuity. It is temporary, targeted and conditional and was approved by the EC in the context of the Temporary Crisis Framework for State Aid measures. Energy-intensive businesses operating in specific sectors that suffered losses can also receive this support.

In 2022, the Government of Flanders introduced a **bridging loan** (overbruggingslening) to support businesses facing acute liquidity needs, insofar as these result from the war in Ukraine and from rising energy costs and, more generally, from the increase in the overall price level. In early 2023, the bridging loan was extended to include all businesses (large, medium-sized, small), which can now borrow up to €2 million.

Instruments were also put in place to restore the solvency of businesses. Long-term funding is supported through **guarantees**. €200 million is being released, for instance, for the authorisation of guarantees by the Flanders Holding Company (Participatiemaatschappij Vlaanderen/PMV), raising the guarantee amount from €400 million to €600 million.

In November 2022, the Government of Flanders approved a €30 million capital increase for the Limburg Investment Company (Limburgse Reconvertiemaatschappij/LRM) to provide extra oxygen to the Limburg economy in these current turbulent economic times and to prepare businesses in Limburg for the climate challenge and the sustainable energy transition. These additional funds enable the LRM to support Limburg businesses in their sustainable energy transition (making their production process, infrastructure and/or operations more sustainable) through the **breakthrough capital** (doorbraakkapitaal) measure. This measure is targeted on medium-sized companies, preferably production or manufacturing companies with a significant employment component.

Through the **Action Plan 'There is Work to be Done'** (Werk aan de winkel), Flanders is focusing on stimulating innovation in the **retail sector**. The action plan was in full implementation in 2022 and the actions are focused on renewed and dynamised shopping concepts and vibrant shopping streets and commercial centres. Cities and municipalities are supported in this by a 'professional team' (profploeg), which is composed of seasoned experts and innovative thinkers who can provide input for the realisation of busier commercial centres and more vibrant neighbourhoods. Through various project calls in 2022 it was aimed to transform vacant or underutilised commercial/business premises into active premises that contribute to strengthening the local economic fabric, and to support municipalities through guidance and the exchange of experiences. As a follow-up to the action plan 'There is Work to be Done', the Government of Flanders approved an **updated Comprehensive Commercial Establishment Policy** (Integraal Handelsvestigingsbeleid) in 2022, which increases the capacity of cities and municipalities to strengthen core shopping areas and create sustainable establishment opportunities for retail. Traders are supported in the digital transformation through the **e-commerce action plan 'The Internet. Your Business Too'** (Het Internet. Ook uw Zaak). In addition, the local retail policy is supported through the development of a Smart Retail Dashboard with relevant policy data.

(b) Competition

The **roll-out of 5G in Flanders** mainly depends on the allocation of 5G rights by the federal government. The auction of 5G rights took place in June 2022 under the responsibility of the Belgian Institute for Postal Services and Telecommunications (BIPT). The roll-out in Flanders can now be realised, as set out in the Flemish Coalition Agreement. The Flemish authorities are open to the establishment of a Tower Company together with a utility company. The goal is to allow telecom operators and the utility company to share infrastructure in order to save costs and to make the roll-out more interesting and speed it up.

Measures are also being taken for the **competitiveness of energy-intensive businesses**. In order to eliminate the competitive disadvantage of energy-intensive businesses due to indirect CO2 costs and to prevent these businesses from relocating outside the EU, Flanders will continue the **compensation scheme for indirect emission costs** in 2022. This measure is intended to guarantee the competitiveness of energy-intensive businesses. Flanders reformed this measure and imposed additional conditions on these energy-intensive businesses (including making green investments if their production processes do not meet certain energy efficiency targets). These businesses will also have to demonstrate how they are moving towards climate neutrality by 2050. In late 2022, Flanders introduced a **reform of the energy policy agreement (energiebeleidsovereenkomst/EBO) policy**, which resulted in an extension of the target group of EBOs to all energy-intensive businesses. Additional obligations are also imposed to encourage these businesses to save energy and take into account the climate component of their business activities.

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 7, 8 and 9**.

3.3.1.2. Flanders' contribution to the NRRP: accelerated licensing and appeal procedures

The project 'Accelerated Licensing and Appeal Procedures' (Snellere vergunnings- en beroepsprocedures) is a reform under the NRRP. This reform initiative aims to establish procedures that result in better decisions without compromising the relevant participation and environmental protection. The reforms needed to accelerate the appeal procedures and eliminate the backlog were laid down by decree. Regulatory pathways will be initiated for optimising the integrated environment permit (omgevingsvergunning), amending the Order on Environment and Spatial Development (omgevingsbesluit) and reforming the environmental impact reporting. Finally, the Environment and Spatial Planning Desk (omgevingsloket) will be expanded as well. To this end, a four-track approach is taken: 1) the overall data structure and procedural approach in function of 'structural decision content', 2) functional and procedural adjustments and extensions of the Environment and Spatial Planning Desk, 3) adjustments and improvements to the technical architecture, and 4) the public desk: access to and participation in environment and spatial development procedures.

The measure described above contributes to **SDG 16**.

3.3.2. Innovation

3.3.2.1. Strong R&D figures and Flemish innovation measures

Innovation takes centre stage in the recovery approach. Primarily, because innovation is indispensable for keeping our businesses competitive and enhancing productivity growth, so that existing jobs are retained and new jobs are created in Flanders. With an R&D intensity of **3.60% of GDP** in 2020, Flanders has far exceeded the 3% R&D target (see also 2.4.). Businesses achieve an R&D intensity of 2.58% in 2020, whereas R&D intensity of all the public research institutions combined amounts to 1.02%. The EC has developed a Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS) that analyses R&D spending of 240 regions. Flanders succeeds in being ranked among the European **innovation leaders** for the first time in the RIS 2021. It performs very strongly on three indicators: innovation expenditures per person employed, innovative SMEs collaborating, and business process innovators. Innovation policy succeeds more and more in reaching **small(er) businesses** as well. R&D business expenditure in Flanders has more than doubled since 2010. During this period, R&D spending of small businesses (up to 50 employees) has more than tripled. The share of small businesses has increased in recent years. Spreading R&D over more sectors and business types presents a challenge for our Region.

With growing R&D resources, Flanders wants to advance to the top five of innovative knowledge regions in Europe and reach the top of the European league table in other areas as well. In the coming years, the Flemish

authorities will, through research and innovation, provide the necessary support for the production and use of sustainable hydrogen technologies and implement its **hydrogen vision** (waterstofvisie). Furthermore, Flanders is focusing on seven key actions to accelerate **the roll-out of carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS)**. Work will be done to develop suitable CCUS infrastructure and the regulatory framework for CO2 transport, among other things. Collaboration with pioneering CCUS countries, such as Norway, the Netherlands and Denmark, will also be expanded.

Flanders is continuing its structural efforts to develop its strategic research centres (SRCs) (Strategische Onderzoekscentra/SOC's), viz. the Flanders Institute for Biotechnology (Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie/VIB), the Interuniversity Micro-Electronics Centre (Interuniversitair Micro-Electronica Centrum/imec), Flanders Make, and the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (Vlaams Instituut voor Technologisch Onderzoek/VITO) by **finalising the renewal of the covenants with the SRCs and subsequently further supporting collaborations between them**. These actors at the centre of innovation make the bridge between scientific research and its practical application. The SRCs are also supported by increasing their grants for purposes of the innovative, economic and societal valorisation of excellent research in micro- and nanoelectronics, biotechnology, sustainable development, digitalisation and manufacturing. Flanders is deliberately focusing its resources on one of the strengths of its innovation policy: the SRCs. In recent years, for example, there has been a sharp increase in the amount invested in the SRCs, a trend which will continue in 2023 (from €243 million in 2018 to almost €350 million in 2023).

At the end of 2022, Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (Vlaams Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen/VLAIO) launched a **new energy transition impulse programme** (with a total budget of €100 million) aimed at accelerating the energy transition and energy efficiency in businesses. This impulse programme is an integrated programme for businesses in various sectors, which contains measures to inform, advise and guide these businesses in their green transition. The programme will also provide demonstration facilities to show businesses the latest applications. Flanders recently launched a new support measure **GREEN investment support**, which is aimed at businesses investing in more efficient energy consumption (adjustments to the production process) on the one hand and greener energy consumption (transition from fossil fuels to green energy) on the other hand in the 2023-2024 period. Flanders' ambition is to develop a long-term policy committed to accelerating the energy transition in businesses and taking additional measures to optimise their energy efficiency.

The **Flanders Future Tech Fund (FFTF)** was established in 2019 with the aim of funding the valorisation of capital-intensive platform technologies developed by SRCs, universities and spearhead clusters. In 2022, FFTF was reoriented to make sure it can operate within an investment context with ESA (European System of Accounts) neutrality. The FFTF was reoriented towards an early-stage financing fund (totalling €75 million) that seeks to respond to the funding needs for early-stage technology initiatives of SRCs, universities and Flemish spearhead clusters, as well as private parties. Through the investments, the FFTF wants to commit to the valorisation of technology developed by Flemish companies, with particular attention to the spearhead areas 'care and well-being', 'digital transformation' and 'climate and sustainability'.

Through **Flanders Technology & Innovation**³⁵, Flanders is showcasing itself as the world's technology laboratory and intends to tackle five major societal challenges: climate and energy (Energy Tech), health (Health Tech), education and labour market (Flanders Next Academy), data and digitalisation (Data Tech) and entertainment and media (Entertainment Tech). Five thematic symposia will be organised around these five themes. Major public events are planned for March 2024 across the five Flemish provinces.

In 2023, the **Artificial Intelligence/AI (€30 million annually) and Cybersecurity/CS (€20 million annually) policy plans** will be reviewed and adjusted if necessary. The AI and CS policy plans are structural in nature and consist of three components: basic strategic research, implementation in businesses and accompanying measures. Digital innovation will also be strengthened in SMEs in early 2023 through the launch of the

³⁵ <https://fti.vlaanderen/en>

activities of the **Flemish European Digital Innovation Hubs**. These innovation hubs will help SMEs in their digital transition through networking, funding, training and the provision of innovation facilities.

3.3.2.2. Flanders' contribution to the NRRP: stronger R&D, focus on hydrogen economy, and a broader innovation base

Using funds from the RRF, Flanders is giving R&D an additional boost with **investments totalling €280 million**. These investments are centred around the three themes of 'digitalisation', 'sustainability' and 'care', and are intended to strengthen knowledge institutes in Flanders as well as enhance R&D activity in businesses. In late 2022, a decision was made on all these investments and more than 250 projects were committed for €280 million. It concerns research and development projects of businesses, research infrastructure of knowledge institutes, universities and university colleges, and projects around bio-economy.

Flanders considers innovation to be the key to meeting international climate, energy and environment targets and commitments in a realistic manner. This should, however, also generate economic added value for our businesses and boost employment. Several additional mutually reinforcing policy initiatives were developed for this purpose in the fields of hydrogen, energy, water and circular economy. To this end, we are, among other things, rolling out a **hydrogen vision and plan** for research and industrial development and investing funds from the EU's RRF totalling €125 million in the hydrogen economy value chain. At the end of 2022, all projects related to various investments in the hydrogen value chain were selected.

€16 million was earmarked for investments in research in agriculture and **water-saving techniques** in businesses. On top of that, Flanders has given extra impetus to the **circular economy** by investing an additional €25 million with specific focus on the construction and manufacturing industries.

Besides additional R&D investment, steps were also taken to increase the number of **innovative businesses** in Flanders and to make the instruments which Flanders uses to encourage businesses to innovate more easily accessible for small businesses. We also want to increasingly use the support instruments to further the economic and societal valorisation of innovation outcomes. This challenge is described in the Flemish Coalition Agreement as 'extension of R&D instruments to small businesses'. To this end, the SME growth subsidy (kmo-groeisubsidie) was reformed, a call for innovative start-up support was launched and support for R&D feasibility studies was put in place. This focus on smaller businesses and a broader innovation base was also included as a reform in the NRRP under the heading '**Broadening the Innovation Base**' (Verbreiding innovatiebasis).

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 7, 8, 9 and 12**.

3.3.3. Digitalisation

3.3.3.1. Flanders continues to commit to the digital transformation

The digital transformation of Flanders is one of the seven key focal points of the Flemish Resilience (VV) Recovery Plan, in which the Government pursues a growth strategy that will turn Flanders into a leading data economy and society. As mentioned in the FRP 2022, this digital transformation rests on three basic horizontal pillars (valorising data as a resource; focusing on public service delivery itself; developing digital talents), which are the connecting themes throughout the various recovery initiatives for digital transformation.

Flanders' digitalisation efforts are bearing fruit. It has moved up three places on the European DESI ranking compared to 2021³⁶, ranking it tenth. The distance with Europe's number five, Spain, is only two percentage points. Flanders' ambition is to be in the top five in 2024. In terms of digital public service delivery for entrepreneurs, we are already in the top five ranking.

On 18 March 2022, the Government of Flanders ratified the **Flemish Data Strategy** (Vlaamse datastrategie) with four priority action areas related to data-driven work within the Flemish public sector. In 2023, the implementation of this data strategy will be further monitored through an update of the annual action plan containing actions of entities or policy areas of the Flemish public sector that contribute to one or more priority

³⁶Source: DESI (Digital Economy and Society Index of the European Commission). See DESI assessment of Flanders: https://assets.vlaanderen.be/image/upload/v1675244046/DESI_Meting_Vlaanderen_2022_-_Eindrapport_hxxdrx.pdf

focus areas of the Flemish Data Strategy. A reflection group will act as a sounding board for the Government of Flanders' data policy, formulate advisory opinions and recommendations to the competent minister and provide inspiring examples and good practices regarding data use, sharing, exchange and management.

All public authorities in Flanders have made strong efforts to digitalise their services in recent years. On 8 July 2022, the **Flemish digital service provision strategy** (Vlaamse digitale dienstverleningsstrategie) was given the go-ahead by the Government of Flanders. This strategy aims to offer Flemish and local authorities clear guidance on how to improve their digital service provision. The strategy includes five key principles, criteria, tools and an action plan to put the new digital service provision strategy into practice. A coherent, integrated **digital strategy for Flanders** will be developed by the end of 2023 to prepare government, the economy, citizens and society for the digital future and to make sure that Flemish public sector entities avail themselves to the maximum extent of digital opportunities so as to provide better services to citizens, entrepreneurs and associations. In addition, the digital strategy for Flanders will also define how Flanders will optimally use its powers to meet the 2030 goals of the EU Digital Decade and remain an advanced region within Europe. Moreover, the Flemish authorities continue to constantly invest in public sector-wide coherence, coordination and information exchange on international dossiers pertaining to digitalisation³⁷.

Within the framework of the VV Recovery Plan, Flanders also continues to commit to **e-inclusion** (from exclusion to inclusion in the digital world) in terms of both the provision of training and access to computers and the Internet. Regarding the latter, 160 local authorities received a grant to (further) roll out their e-inclusion policies. The first action was to support vulnerable citizens in acquiring an Internet connection in their own homes.

As indicated under 3.3.2.1, the **AI and CS policy plans** will be reviewed in 2023 and adjusted if necessary.

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 9 and 16**.

3.3.3.2. Flanders' contribution to the NRRP: digitalisation of the Flemish public sector

With the digitalisation of the Flemish public sector, Flanders is providing important input for axis 2 (digital transformation) of the NRRP. The digitalisation of the Flemish public sector falls into 18 sub-projects. Their implementation is well on track and realisations can already be shown. For example, the FIT (Flanders Investment & Trade) Business Academy was established. This is an internal learning platform that allows the FIT offices abroad and in Flanders to serve their customers globally in a correct and informed manner. Under the 'Municipality without a Town Hall' (Gemeente zonder gemeentehuis) project, 178 local authorities are currently using recovery funds to speed up the digitalisation of their processes and service provision.

The measure described above contributes to **SDGs 9 and 16**.

3.4. Sustainability, energy and mobility

3.4.1. Sustainability

3.4.1.1. Circular economy, Blue Deal and defragmentation of the landscape in Flanders

The Government of Flanders has expressed the ambition to be a frontrunner in **circular economy** in Europe by 2030. The 'Circular Economy' is one of the seven transition priorities from the fourth Flemish Strategy for Sustainable Development (vierde Vlaamse Strategie Duurzame Ontwikkeling/VSDO4) (see 4.2.). The Circular Economy Policy Research Centre (Steunpunt Circulaire Economie) streamlines policy-relevant research in the context of the circular economy in Flanders. To this end, it has a rolling research agenda in which researchers work around five thematic clusters³⁸. The Materials Information System (Materialeninformatiesysteem/MATIS), for instance, is still in full development. It will allow us to better trace and report waste and material streams. In addition, Flanders has developed and launched several multi-year action plans over the past year, such as the policy programme 'Towards Circular Construction' (Op weg naar

³⁷ Within the Strategic Consultative Body on International Affairs (Strategisch Overlegorgaan Internationale Aangelegenheden/SOIA), a working group around digitalisation is active in which all Flemish policy areas have a seat and which disseminates topical information and ensures coordination on a weekly basis.

³⁸ <https://vlaanderen-circulair.be/en>

Circulair Bouwen), the Local Materials Management Implementation Plan (Uitvoeringsplan voor Lokaal Materialenbeheer) and the Green Deal with the distribution sector to reduce disposable packaging. Other plans will be further implemented in the coming year, such as the Plastics Implementation Plan (Uitvoeringsplan Kunststoffen) and the Packaging Plan 2.0 (Verpakkingenplan 2.0). In 2023, the Interregional Cooperation Agreement (Interregionaal Samenwerkingsakkoord/ISA) on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Litter must be finally approved in order to make policy more uniform across Belgium. This framework also provides for the introduction of three new EPR streams over time: nappies, textiles and furniture. Finally, Flanders is implementing its long-term vision on the final treatment of waste, with directing taxes discouraging the incineration of recyclable waste and waste treatment capacity in Flanders being customised to the circular economy.

The **Blue Deal** is a comprehensive and ambitious impulse programme through which the Flemish authorities want to make the water system, water management and water use in Flanders climate-robust. To that end, the Blue Deal focuses on the two following strategic solution paths: (1) the transition to water management aimed at retention, infiltration and storage, and (2) fast-tracking economical, sustainable and circular water use. The programme encompasses more than eighty projects and actions in total in the areas of, inter alia, investment, R&D, digitalisation, monitoring, awareness-raising and legislation.

Also in 2023, Flanders will sustain an increased investment pace for the Blue Deal, with an additional budget of €100 million. This budget will mainly be spent on structural interventions in the open space, in order to maximise water storage in upstream parts of river and watercourse basins by creating wetlands and green/blue infrastructure. This new investment package is not part of the VV Recovery Plan, nor of the NRRP. The investments financed through this plan were all initiated in 2021 and 2022.

Within Europe, Belgium has one of the highest population densities, a high level of economic activity and the second most dense road network. When these roads were built, habitats for plants and animals were lost. For 20 years now, Flanders has been committed to the ecological defragmentation of priority blackspots on regional transport infrastructure (roads and waterways). Ecological defragmentation connects wildlife habitats through defragmentation measures or safe crossings. There are different types of defragmentation measures depending on the animals present, the habitats to be connected and the obstacles.

The Government of Flanders has decided in its Coalition Agreement 2019-2024 to commit to a **Flemish Action Programme for Ecological Defragmentation (Vlaams actieprogramma rond ecologische ontsnippering/VAPEO)**. In September 2020, the VAPEO - Part I (Roads) was approved by the Agency for Roads and Traffic (Agentschap Wegen en Verkeer/AWV), the Department of Environment and Spatial Development (Departement Omgeving/DOMG) and the Agency for Nature and Forests (Agentschap Natuur en Bos/ANB). The Research Institute for Nature and Forest (Instituut voor Natuur en Bos/onderzoek/INBO) provides scientific support. The agreements made for the implementation of this project are set out in a protocol that was signed by the Flemish Ministers competent for Environment and Spatial Development and for Mobility on 23 September 2020. During the 2019-2024 period, the VAPEO is addressing 15 priority blackspots or working on the further underpinning of complex projects. It is not a strict list of projects, but rather a rolling programme. All known blackspots on regional roads and motorways are entered in a defragmentation database and are scored on the basis of ecological and feasibility criteria. A project that scores high can still be included in the list of blackspots to be addressed.

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 12, 13, 15 and 16**.

3.4.1.2. Flanders' contribution to the NRRP: investments and reforms in the circular economy, Blue Deal and defragmentation of the landscape in Flanders

The **Circular Economy** component of the NRRP contributes towards the development of a circular and low-carbon economy. It includes three projects of Flanders. *The first* was a reform project to **renew the governance of the Circular Flanders (Vlaanderen Circulair) partnership**. This has since been successfully completed and the renewed public-private partnership has started. This partnership focuses on widely supported Future Scenarios (Toekomstbeelden). The Steering Group and the more operational Project Group meet on a regular basis. The six rolling Work Agendas, together with the seven strategic levers, define the projects and actions

for 2023 and beyond. The *second project* is the **Recycling Hub (Recyclagehub)**, which is an investment project that aims to support recycling projects in Flanders through two calls for grants. Both project calls have since been launched and were a great success. €30 million was allocated to 14 investment projects that will be operational by mid-2026. *Thirdly*, the €25 million in recovery funds for **circular construction and circular manufacturing** were used by Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (VLAIO) for a mix of instruments: Collective Research & Development and Collective Knowledge Dissemination (Collectief Onderzoek & Ontwikkeling en Collectieve Kennisverspreiding/COOCK) projects, SME growth subsidy, life extension projects and Circular Economy Living Labs. The projects work on very different aspects of the circular economy:

- The construction industry focuses, inter alia, on digitalisation, new funding models for circular construction materials, hybrid forms of ownership, change-oriented construction, construction with adobe bricks and new forms of circular knowledge sharing.
- The manufacturing industry works, among other things, on scaling up the repair of electrical appliances, circular furniture and carpets, promoting the rental and sharing of products, circular wood industry and different strategies for a circular approach to textiles. The projects carry out cases across Flanders and have the ambition to upgrade to the Flemish level.

Flanders has a structurally low water availability and is therefore very sensitive to water scarcity due to drought. In addition, the organisation of our water system and the high degree of paving make Flanders vulnerable to waterlogging and flooding in the event of excessive precipitation. Finally, sustainable water use in industry, agriculture, shipping, households, etc. is crucial to avoid structural water shortages.

The **Blue Deal** investment agenda forms an integrated part of the VV Recovery Plan (14 projects, €343 million) and the NRRP (10 projects, €290 million). The investment projects are set up by four different policy areas of the Flemish public administration: Environment and Spatial Planning (Omgeving/OMG), Mobility and Public Works (Mobiliteit en Openbare Werken/MOW), Agriculture and Fisheries (Landbouw en Visserij/LV), and Economy, Science and Innovation (Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie/EWI). The implementation of the Blue Deal started in 2021 and is being coordinated by the Coordination Committee on Integrated Water Policy (Coördinatiecommissie Integraal Waterbeleid/CIW) and the OMG policy area.

€20 million was reserved under the RRF for investments in the **energy renovation of public buildings in Flanders**. Increased investment in the renovation of the building stock will stimulate and accelerate the energy renovation of these buildings and contribute to achieving the targets regarding energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emission reduction set out in the Flemish Energy and Climate Plan, the Energy Efficiency Directive and the Long-term Renovation Strategy (langetermijnrenovatiestrategie/LTRS).

The Flemish Agency for Public Sector Energy Saving (Vlaams Energiebedrijf/VEB) realised 377 energy-saving projects at 163 public entities through leverage funding, accounting for annual savings of 2,500 tonnes of CO₂ and more than 15 GWh of primary energy per year. Most projects concern building envelope measures, i.e. insulation of floors, walls and roofs or the replacement of joinery. Because these funds were insufficient to fund all the applications, another €4 million was added from the Flemish Climate Fund (Vlaams Klimaatfonds), which was only to be used for building envelope measures and boiler room renovations.

The VEB's mission is to unburden the public sector in the path towards more sustainable and efficient energy management. To this end, it has developed activities in the field of energy supply (green electricity and natural gas), energy efficiency and energy data. The VEB acts as the central purchasing body in this context, so that the services are sourced from the market to the maximum extent and the public entities concerned comply with public procurement law without having to organise a procurement procedure themselves.

The project **Defragmentation of the Landscape in Flanders** (Ontsnippen van Vlaams Landschap) within the framework of the NRRP implements Part 1 (Roads) of the Flemish Action Programme for Ecological Defragmentation. The project aims for a structurally organised, programmatic approach to the fragmentation problems both within the Flemish public sector and in cooperation with various external partners. By the end of 2023, a number of defragmentation projects will be tendered again with recovery funds. Work is also done within this recovery project around communication, support instruments and the response to acute bottlenecks.

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 12, 13, 15 and 16**.

3.4.2. Energy

3.4.2.1. General background: the Flemish Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030

On 9 December 2019, the Government of Flanders gave its final approval to the **Flemish Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030** (Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatplan/VEKP 2021-2030) as a contribution to the National Energy and Climate Plan (Nationaal Energie- en Klimaatplan/NEKP). The VEKP contains targets and ambitions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing energy efficiency and raising renewable energy production, among other things. It outlines more than 300 concrete measures in various sectors designed to ensure that the targets set are achieved. Progress is monitored annually in the VEKP Progress Report³⁹. In spring 2023, the VEKP will be updated for purposes of the draft update of the NEKP, which is to be delivered to the EC no later than 30 June 2023.

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 7 and 13**

3.4.2.2. Investments and reforms with significant impact on the achievement of energy and climate targets

Apart from renovation, €57.85 million has been set aside to future-proof the electricity grid through grants for battery storage. Funds are also earmarked to support energy renovations combined with asbestos removal (€46.2 million). An additional €40 million is appropriated to support local authorities and various sector organisations in removing asbestos in the existing building stock.

Some other reforms and/or investments are also being implemented in the short term, which have a significant impact on achieving the energy and climate targets:

- Extension and expansion of the **voluntary energy policy agreements (EBOs)** from 1 January 2023 between the Flemish Region and participating energy-intensive businesses (see also 3.3.1.1).
- Introduction of a **reinforced regulatory framework for non-energy-intensive businesses** with an energy consumption between 0.1 petajoule (PJ)/year and 0.02 PJ /year from 1 January 2023.
- **Phase-out of fossil fuels in new builds:** low-temperature heat is required as a minimum from 1 January 2023 onwards. From 1 January 2025, fossil heating will no longer be allowed in new builds.
- Introduction of a **renovation obligation for dwellings** transferred in full ownership **from 1 January 2023**, in addition to the renovation obligation for non-residential buildings from 1 January 2022. All dwellings subject to this obligation will have to be renovated as a minimum to energy performance certificate (EPC) label D within five years.
- **Reform and extension of interest-free energy loans to My Renovation Loan (Mijn VerbouwLening/MVL).** Through the MVL a higher maximum amount can be borrowed (up to €60,000) for a longer term (up to 25 years) and for a larger target group.
- **Introduction of a PV (photovoltaic) obligation for large electricity consumers and public buildings.**
- **Impulse programme for greening the heat demand of the ESR industry.**

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 7 and 13**.

3.4.2.3. Fighting energy poverty

On 10 December 2021, the Government of Flanders approved the Vision Paper 'Energy Poverty Plan 2025' (Visienota Energiearmoedeplan 2025). The new **Energy Poverty Plan 2025** concentrates even more on preventive measures that improve energy efficiency in dwellings as a structural measure to prevent energy poverty. In addition, curative measures are to ensure that energy supply disconnections are avoided and that support services are called in at the right time. The Energy Poverty Plan 2025 is a rolling action plan, which means actions will both be dropped and added throughout the implementation period, if this proves necessary to achieve current or future updated policy objectives. The actions will be developed further together with the relevant stakeholders. A first evaluation of the plan is scheduled for 2023.

³⁹ Flemish Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/veka/beleid/vlaams-energie-en-klimaatplan-vekp-2021-2030> and the VEKP Progress Report 2022 (October 2022): https://assets.vlaanderen.be/image/upload/v1667911572/VEKP-voortgangsrapportering_2022_srjql.pdf

The **Distress Purchase Fund** (Noodkoopfonds) was set up for owners of low-quality housing who, on the one hand, have insufficient own resources to make the necessary investments and, on the other hand, do not qualify for renovation grants or urban renewal grants due to lack of solvency. Three project calls were already launched between 2020 and 2022. For the last project call, the renovation budget per dwelling was raised to €50,000 and a support allowance of €3,000 was provided for the participating public centres for social welfare (Openbare Centra voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn/OCMWs). To reduce the workload for the OCMWs, a proposal will be submitted to the Government of Flanders to no longer apply an administratively burdensome call system, but to instead use **funding on a first come, first served basis** from 2023 onwards.

The roll-out of the digital meter since 2019 offers new opportunities to timely detect and address budgets going off track. The legislation was amended in 2021 to be able to better respond to these opportunities. The main changes are the earlier activation of the prepayment function that is built in in the digital meter, and a more optimal use of the data provided by the digital meter to call in support faster. These changes will be **reviewed two years after their entry into force for purposes of adjustment and additional optimisations**.

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 1, 7 and 13**.

3.4.2.4. Flanders' contribution to the NRRP: reforms and investments that are closely linked to the VEKP and the energy transition: greening of the transport sector, the modal shift, renovation of the building stock in Flanders, green heat, R&D

The transformation of our energy system requires large-scale investments, which need to be financed with both public and private funds. The VV Recovery Plan earmarks additional resources to kick-start the economic recovery, on the one hand, and to support the crucial challenges of making Flanders' economy more sustainable, on the other, in line with the climate ambitions set out in the VEKP 2021-2030 and the 2050 long-term climate strategy. Some VV projects are also part of the NRRP. Below, the spearheads are briefly described that have a close link with the VEKP and the energy transition:

- **Greening of the transport sector and the modal shift (€213 million)** (see 3.4.3.2.)
- **Renovation of the building stock in Flanders (€422 million) and green heat (€44.3 million)**
In line with the VEKP and the Flemish Renovation Strategy 2050 (Vlaamse Renovatiestrategie 2050), more resources are made available to increase the renovation activity of the public, private and social building stocks. The energy and housing renovation grants were reformed into one single optimised grant (My Renovation Grant/MijnVerbouwPremie) from 1 July 2022, which can be applied for through a one-stop shop since 1 October 2022. These grants are funded for an amount of €180 million with European RRF funds. In addition, an EPC label grant was introduced on 1 January 2021 (€25.35 million) and the demolition and reconstruction grant was extended and raised (€17.6 million). Extra funds are also provided for public building renovation (€20 million) and an energy-efficient social housing stock (€35 million).
The potential for green heat, residual heat and heat networks in Flanders will be further unlocked. Several project calls were launched to this end in 2021 and 2022. All these investments are part of the NRRP.
- **R&D (€225 million) (see also 3.3.2.2.)**
The climate and energy transition represents an important opportunity for Flanders to position itself as a top region for research and innovation in all sectors of society.
More information on the transition to a sustainable hydrogen industry in Flanders and the strengthening of business R&D (including co-financing of Flemish projects receiving support from the ETS Innovation Fund (incl. carbon capture and storage (CCS)/carbon capture and utilisation (CCU)) is given under 3.3.2.2.

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 7 and 13**.

3.4.3. Mobility

3.4.3.1. Investment in sustainable transport infrastructure and modes

In 2022, the Government of Flanders continued to invest in the transition to a green and sustainable transport sector, both outside and within (see 3.4.3.2.) the framework of the recovery policy. Apart from the investments, the Government of Flanders is prioritising reforms that promote the use and supply of soft mobility and public transport and contribute to reducing our fossil fuel dependence.

Outside the framework of the recovery policy, structural investments are being made in the transition to sustainable transport infrastructure and the promotion of the use and supply of soft and public transport modes. To tackle mobility challenges efficiently, the MOW policy area draws up an Integrated Investment Programme (Geïntegreerd InvesteringsProgramma/GIP) every year. On top of the recovery funds (infra), the GIP 2023 reserves €318.8 million in additional funds for cycling infrastructure⁴⁰. In addition to investments in the electrification of the bus fleet of the Flemish Public Transport Company (Vlaamse Vervoermaatschappij/VVM) De Lijn, at least €321 million in investments are earmarked for public transport in 2023. On top of the recovery funds, additional investments will finally also be made in greening the bus fleet of De Lijn. An additional 65 electric buses and 17 electric tram buses will be purchased in 2023, to be delivered from 2024.

The investments in cycling infrastructure (see above and under 3.4.3.2.) are in line with Flanders' new cycling ambition (March 2023), which is to create a 'cycling reflex': **cycling should be chosen spontaneously as the mode of transport for every short- to medium-length journey**. The cycling ambition puts a strong focus on the importance of safe cycling infrastructure and road safety for cyclists, but also formulates measures regarding communication and awareness-raising, data and innovation, theft prevention and the potential of the bicycle for commuting and the logistics sector, among others. Within the framework of the **Hoppin points** (see infra), efforts will be made to provide quality bike storage and other facilities. The new cycling ambition confirms the position of the bicycle as an important mode of transport for the *first mile* and *last mile*, as well as for longer journeys, which is owing to the emergence of e-bikes, for instance, which make longer distances doable by bicycle.

Finally, the Government of Flanders wants to promote the use and supply of soft and public transport modes through the further roll-out of **basic accessibility**. This a mobility system in which Flanders aims to adopt a **tailor-made approach to public transport demand**. This new demand-oriented mobility system makes optimal use of available transport and financial resources, tailored to the 15 Flemish **transport regions**. A new core and complementary public transport network will be rolled out in phases from January 2023. In addition, bespoke mobility solutions (flex transport) are provided for specific target groups. **Hoppin points** (transport nodes) facilitate interconnection between different transport modes, sharing systems and public transport. More than 60 Hoppin points were already in operation by the end of 2022 and up to at least 250 Hoppin points will be realised additionally in 2023. 2022 also saw the launch of the first pilot project for the **Hoppin contact centre** (Hoppincentrale). This is a one-stop shop for public transport that provides direction to carriers and acts as an interface for travellers. It will be further rolled out in 2023 and include, inter alia, a second pilot project in February 2023. By making public transport more attractive, sustainable and integrated, the Government of Flanders not only wants to effect a change in behaviour, but also reduce our fossil fuel dependence.

The measures described above contribute to **SDGs 3, 9, 11 and 13**.

3.4.3.2. Flanders' contribution to the NRRP: investments and reforms in sustainable transport infrastructure and modes (cycling infrastructure, charging infrastructure, greening of the bus fleet, stimulation of zero-emission transport, emissions fraud)

Within the framework of the VV Recovery Plan, the MOW policy area is investing in projects around cycling infrastructure, sustainable mobility projects and safe transport infrastructure. In order to finance these priorities, optimal use is made of EU funding under the RRF, in addition to Flanders' own (recovery) funds.

⁴⁰ GIP 2023: https://assets.vlaanderen.be/image/upload/v1679068809/20230317_-_DefinitiefGIP2023_-_ParlementRapport_zonder_bedragen_jhfvmt.pdf

Under the VV Recovery Plan, **priority investments are being made in cycling infrastructure**, both along regional roads (approx. €252 million) and municipal roads (approx. €157 million). In the context of the recovery policy, a lot of cycling initiatives were realised and cycling investments (the construction of new cycling paths, the repair and improvement of existing cycling paths, the construction of cycling bridges and tunnels and bike storage facilities) were actively prepared and implemented in 2022. Through project calls, the Flemish authorities earmark an envelope of €157 million for the co-financing of bicycle highways and municipal cycling infrastructure. 218 municipalities and the 5 provinces receive one-third to maximum half of their share in the cost of the investment projects. This means that, combined with other grants, at least €450 million in local investments will be made in better cycling facilities. A total of 1,500 projects were submitted, which together represent a grant application of over €244 million, which far exceeds the maximum budget of €157 million. Another top priority in Flanders' recovery policy is the **accelerated roll-out of charging infrastructure** as part of the **transition to all-electric driving** (approx. €28.5 million). In 2021, 210 projects were selected through a call for projects to roll out semi-public charging infrastructure on private property. These projects are being realised systematically since November 2021. A second similar project call in 2022 generated 253 approved projects to be implemented in 2023 and 2024. 2022 also saw the start of the first concession for public recharging points on public property, which will be installed over the next two years. An initial project call in 2021 for (ultra-)fast chargers along major traffic axes resulted in 49 approved projects to be delivered by mid-2023. A second call was launched in 2022, during which seven additional sites were selected.

The ambitious roll-out of charging infrastructure is part of the Government of Flanders' **new Clean Power for Transport Action Plan**, which contains ambitions and policy objectives for the 2021-2025 period. Flanders aims to install 30,000 additional charging point equivalents (CPEs) by 2025 in addition to the basic operational network of 5,000 charging points⁴¹. In 2021, a policy framework and potential maps were drawn up for the roll-out of charging infrastructure. **By December 2022, 17,824 charging point equivalents (CPEs) were already accessible in Flanders.** The ambitious roll-out of charging infrastructure in Flanders furthers the Government of Flanders' ambition to completely phase out sales of combustion engine passenger cars and vans from 2029.

In the context of the recovery policy, work is also done to further **green the bus fleet** of the Flemish Public Transport Company - De Lijn (€93 million). The priority focus is on replacing the highly polluting Euro III buses with zero-emission and hybrid electric buses. In 2021 already, orders were placed for the conversion of 280 hybrid buses to plug-in e-hybrid buses and for the purchase of 44 e-hybrid buses and the charging infrastructure for the bus depots. No less than 240 buses were already converted to plug-in e-hybrid buses in 2022. In addition, 84 e-hybrid buses, 60 all-electric buses and 7 all-electric minibuses will be delivered in different phases in 2023. By the end of 2023, all buses should be in active service. The further greening of the Flemish bus fleet meets the Government of Flanders' goal of a zero-emission service to city centres by 2025 at the latest.

Finally, in the context of the Flemish recovery policy, investments are being made in the **modal shift to water**. Through the VV Recovery Plan, the Government of Flanders is investing over €99 million to improve the navigability of the Albert Canal (raising and adaptation of bridges), approximately €17 million to realise and optimise quay walls, about €13 million to raise the water transport capacity of the Dender River (renovation of the lock weir complex) and €27 million to make compulsory purchases for the construction of the new sea lock in Zeebrugge. Within the framework of the 'Blue Deal', the Government of Flanders is investing more than €36 million in the construction of **seven additional fixed pumping installations and the renovation of three lock complexes** through European RRF funds under the NRRP. One project was already fully implemented in 2022. The other projects are now being implemented or prepared, so that all the works can start by early 2023 at the latest.

⁴¹ In the context of the roll-out of public charging infrastructure, we speak of CPE, with one CPE being defined in a logical weighting system. A charging station with a limited charging speed/power (3-7 kW) corresponds to one CPE; a normal power charging station (11-22 kW) corresponds to two CPEs. This is four for an AC fast charger (43 kW), five for a DC fast charger (50 kW to less than 150 kW) and ten for an ultra-fast charger (150 kW and more). Charging points that are accessible to everyone for at least ten hours on a 24 hour basis only count for half. In this way, we ensure a uniform equivalent in the different powers and accessibility of charging infrastructure.

In terms of the **fight against emissions fraud**, the Government of Flanders is working on a regulatory framework for the monitoring and enforcement of vehicle emissions in Flanders. A nitrogen oxide (NOx) test procedure is being developed, for instance, as part of the periodic vehicle roadworthiness test. An initial study on this was delivered in 2022 and generated two possible test concepts. A research project is currently being prepared to design a practical test that can be integrated into the vehicle roadworthiness test. In cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, initial steps were also taken in 2022 to extend the scope of roadside inspections to all vehicle categories. In 2023, we will continue to work on the necessary technical, legal and organisational initiatives towards the structural implementation of large-scale and structural roadside vehicle emissions monitoring.

The measures described under 3.4.2 contribute to **SDGs 3, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 13**.

3.5. Social cohesion

The VV Recovery Plan focuses on strengthening mental well-being and social cohesion in society. Several measures taken in the context of this plan are still ongoing and were reported in the FRP 2022.

The recent energy crisis necessitated additional measures in several areas. In the context of this energy crisis, a whole number of new actions were included in the **Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan (Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding/VAPA)**, which was approved and updated by the Government of Flanders on 28 October 2022. With this plan, the Government of Flanders wants to commit to the EU 2030 target to reduce poverty and social exclusion (see also 2.5), as well as contribute to the realisation of the Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee (within the EPSR context) in Flanders, with the specific aim of **reducing child poverty**. The VAPA⁴² focuses on a limited number of priority, public sector-wide and integrated strategic objectives for combating under-protection and child poverty, for activating and empowering people and increasing self-reliance, for reducing the risk of ending up in poverty in the event of sudden changes in people's lives and for providing a high-quality, liveable and healthy environment for all. The key measures and their status update are listed below.

Efforts are being made to improve neighbourhoods by means of **neighbourhood improvement contracts** (wijkverbeteringscontracten) in which the Flemish authorities and the local authorities (and local partners) jointly undertake to tackle problems in vulnerable neighbourhoods through neighbourhood-oriented projects. Local authorities, welfare services and justice work together in an integrated manner within the SAMEN project to prevent young people from falling (or relapsing) into a criminal lifestyle. This intensive cooperation is intended to reduce (feelings of) unsafety in the neighbourhoods concerned. The aim is to complete a pathway with these children and young people so that they can resist the temptation to commit petty crimes.

From the 2021-2022 school year onwards, 12 pioneers who want to commit to providing a **continuous line of childcare for babies and toddlers, pre-primary education and out-of-school childcare** are given the opportunity to do so. In this context, it is considered how connections can be made with the home environment and the neighbourhood, with special attention being paid to language development and Dutch language acquisition.

The **Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Rooflessness and Homelessness** (actieplan tot voorkoming en bestrijding van dak- en thuisloosheid) wants to provide a response to an extreme form of social exclusion and poverty. This plan contains measures for preventing evictions, expanding the Housing First methodology and improving access to the social housing market, and focuses specifically on the position of vulnerable children and young people.

Following the war in Ukraine and the recent rise in energy prices, a societal crisis has emerged that will have a major impact on people in poverty or at risk of poverty. This crisis peaked in 2022, with prices soaring mainly in the second half of 2022. As a result, gas and electricity are gradually becoming unaffordable for more and more households (see also 3.4.2.3.). A larger number of households is turning to the public centres for social

⁴² https://armoede.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/media/bijgestuurd_VAPA.pdf

welfare (OCMWs) for help and assistance. Given that the OCMWs are currently being overwhelmed by requests for help, additional funding is provided for them from 2022 onwards. This measure temporarily strengthens the capacity of the OCMWs for the period 2022 through 2024. The centres for general welfare work (Centra Algemeen Welzijnswerk/CAW's) and the debt counselling partnerships (samenwerkingsverbanden schuldhulpverlening) also receive additional support totalling €5 million until the end of 2024.

The Government of Flanders also decided in 2023 to strengthen the **Flemish housing loan to households and singles with a capped income**, raising the budget to €1.3 billion. This budget increase represents an additional 1,000 loans. Inflation and rising interest rates are putting pressure on young buyers' ability to acquire their own home. The Flemish Housing Loan (Vlaamse Woonlening) is proving a successful instrument to support prospective buyers in their search. Given the growing demand, the budget for this is being raised. This will allow people in Flanders with a capped income to permanently acquire their own home. This often goes hand in hand with major renovation works, which will reduce the energy bill.

Given the even greater importance of food aid in times of COVID-19, Flanders has invested an additional €2.8 million in the **development of Flanders-wide social distribution platforms** and their transition to **circular food hubs** by mid-2025. The **roll-out of the Integrated Broad Reception** (Geïntegreerd Breed Onthaal) from mid-2021 across Flanders to improve the detection and realisation of rights and to enhance service accessibility represented an extra investment of €7.5 million. Finally, €13.5 million has been earmarked to support 132 projects in Flanders and Brussels over a period of two years to turn their neighbourhoods into Caring Neighbourhoods (Zorgzame Buurten) that enhance social cohesion, among other things.

With the **Plan for Living Together** (Plan Samenleven), developed in 2022, the Flemish authorities want to support local authorities more efficiently and effectively, using clear objectives and well-defined actions, to make living together in diversity a success. The Plan for Living Together defines seven objectives and 24 actions for which local authorities can receive financial and capacity building support during the period from 2022 to 2024. The effectiveness and progress will be regularly monitored in order to show the concrete results of living together in Flanders. The Plan for Living Together is part of the updated policy plan on horizontal integration and equal opportunities.

The Government of Flanders wants to **intensify the fight against child poverty**. Child poverty deprives children and young people of opportunities that allow them to reach their full potential and subsequently build a bright future. At the same time, we note that, locally, a lot of players are actively engaged with the group of children and young people and their parents. We therefore want to connect people and organisations that are active locally and allow them to offer a response to concrete problems, e.g. empty lunch boxes, materials at school, parenting support, homework support, language support, leisure activities, etc. The Government of Flanders decided to release an additional €4 million in 2023 and 2024 to strengthen the fight against child poverty at the local level.

Through the **Together on the Street** (Samen op straat) project, SAAMO built up expertise in Antwerp city to work with young people from densely populated neighbourhoods and urbanised municipalities, to mobilise their talents for their neighbourhood, and to allow them to participate in designing policy solutions and tackling small problems in their neighbourhood together with neighbourhood volunteers. The experiences and methodologies developed in Antwerp can be extended to other similar poorer densely populated neighbourhoods in cities and urbanised municipalities. We are setting up four additional Together on the Street projects in cooperation with SAAMO and interested local authorities.

The measures described above contribute to **EPSR principles 1, 3, 11, 14, 16 and 19, to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 and 11** and to **employment guideline 8**.

4. SDGS: FOURTH FLEMISH STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE

4.1. Contribution of Flanders to the Voluntary National Review

On 5 May 2022, the Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development/IMCSD (Interministeriële Conferentie Duurzame Ontwikkeling/IMCDO), chaired by the Minister-President of Flanders, decided to prepare a second Voluntary National Review (VNR) for Belgium and present it in New York at the United Nations High Level Political Forum in July 2023. The first VNR dates back to 2017. A VNR is a periodic, voluntary national progress report on the implementation of the SDGs within the framework of Agenda 2030.

The VNR is drafted by the IMCSD working group 'national coordination on sustainable development at the international level' (nationale coördinatie inzake duurzame ontwikkeling op internationaal niveau). Experts of the administrations from the various entities have a seat on this working group. The federal government acts as coordinating body and the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development (Federaal Instituut Duurzame Ontwikkeling/FIDO) chairs the working group. DKBUZA participates in the activities on behalf of Flanders and is responsible for coordinating Flanders' contribution to the second Voluntary National Review.

For the drafting of the second VNR, it was opted for a 'synthetic' VNR that only presents the key elements from the contributions of the various public entities to the SDGs. Reference will be made to an annex that will include the detailed contributions of the various entities. All this information will also be available on the website sdgs.be.

On 21 October 2022, the Government of Flanders adopted **the Contribution of Flanders to the Second Voluntary National Review on Progress on Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals**. A draft VNR was submitted to the IMCSD for approval on 13 February 2023.

4.2. SDG governance in Flanders

As a government, Flanders holds many levers (policies and investments) to help achieve the SDGs. Flanders' contribution to the VNR can be consulted for an overview of the actions⁴³. Flanders has **strong governance regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**, which is based on the Fourth Flemish Strategy for Sustainable Development (VSDO4)⁴⁴. Through this strategy, the Government of Flanders continues its commitment to a sustainable society with Vision 2050 (Visie 2050) as long-term compass and Focus 2030 (Vizier 2030) as focal point⁴⁵.

Vision 2050, the long-term strategy for Flanders, outlines the future vision for the Flanders that we wish to have in 2050: a strong, inclusive, open, resilient and internationally connected Flanders that creates prosperity and well-being in a smart, innovative and sustainable manner and where every individual counts. **Focus 2030 is Flanders' objectives framework for 2030** and its translation of the SDGs. It is monitored on the basis of 111 indicators. Each of the Government of Flanders ministers conducts a policy that furthers the achievement of these goals, and gives it shape.

The Government of Flanders uses an approach based on transition management to achieve its ambitions. The **seven transition priorities** are: (1) Circular Economy: switch to the circular economy, (2) Living, Learning and Working in 2050: transforming the way we live, learn and work, (3) Industry 4.0: aims to digitally transform industry as a lever for sustainability, competitiveness and productivity of industry, (4) Living Together in 2050: digital transformation of the cultural sector and the future of the care model, (5) Mobility: the Flemish Mobility Vision 2040 as a basis for future mobility policy, (6) Energy and Climate: energy and climate transition in implementation of the Flemish Energy and Climate Plan (VEKP), and (7) Environment and Spatial Development for the Future: working on a spatial transformation and addressing climate adaptation and biodiversity challenges.

⁴³ <https://beslissingenvlaamseregering.vlaanderen.be/?dateOption=select&endDate=2022-10-21T21%3A59%3A59.000Z&search=Vrijwillig%20Nationaal%20Rapport&startDate=2022-10-20T22%3A00%3A00.000Z>

⁴⁴ <https://beslissingenvlaamseregering.vlaanderen.be/document-view/61A09A14364ED90008000146>

⁴⁵ <https://www.vlaanderen.be/uw-overheid/beleid/het-vlaamse-beleid-voor-duurzame-ontwikkeling/vlaamse-strategie-duurzame-ontwikkeling/monitoring-vizier-2030>

Partnerships are crucial to achieving the goals. Flanders is therefore working closely together with the stakeholders. Through the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten/VVSG) Flanders supports local authorities in activities that flesh out Flanders' sustainable development policy, such as the organisation of the Week of the Sustainable Municipality (Week van de Duurzame Gemeente). The SDGs are also firmly anchored among local authorities, as evidenced by the commitment of the umbrella organisations VVSG and the Association of Flemish Provinces (Vereniging van Vlaamse Provincies/VVP) to prepare a Voluntary Subnational Review. CIFAL Flanders is another priority partner that provides information and inspiration for and raises awareness of the UN Agenda 2030 and the SDGs and as such broadens support for Flanders' relevant policy.

5. USE OF STRUCTURAL FUNDS

5.1. ESF Programme 2021-2027

Flanders' ESF programme 2021-2027 was approved by the EC at the end of 2022, and the first calls are scheduled for 2023. The programme includes five priorities for a total amount of €432 million in European aid:

- **Priority 1 - Access to the labour market:** Flanders' ESF+ programme aims to increase the outflow to work of unemployed jobseekers, promote the participation of economically inactive people in the labour market and develop an effective retention policy. The programme sets up actions, for instance, that have an immediate effect on the individual, on the relationship between labour market supply and demand and on the enhancement of access to the labour market of the targeted groups.
- **Priority 2 - Social inclusion:** Flanders' ESF+ programme commits, through social inclusion, to strengthening the basic conditions for labour market participation and a fully-fledged participation in society, and focuses on the integral pathway of e.g. economically inactive groups and people in poverty. A call for **local partnerships** is launched in 2023 for sustainable local partnerships to support the most vulnerable jobseekers and economically inactive people. The partnerships want to enable the most vulnerable unemployed people to participate fully in society, including but not exclusively through employment. The key principle of these partnerships which may be set up by the VDAB and local authorities is that they can adopt a more customised approach.
- **Priority 3 - Lifelong learning:** (Specific objective - Strengthening training participation and skills). Within this objective, Flanders' ESF+ programme supports actions that invest in competence enhancement of individuals and promote lifelong learning, a real learning culture in organisations and sustainable learning careers. The programme thus aims to contribute to higher training participation in Flanders. This will be achieved, among other things, through the **intersectoral partnerships**, which will focus on competency assessments, the development and provision of training courses, and competence forecasting. In doing so, the bridge is also made with the creation of innovative forms of training that support the 'appetite to learn' (leergoesting). The partnerships will also aim for learning experiences by allowing employees to work (temporarily) with other employers. This introduces competence thinking in a forward-looking and sustainable manner and makes the connection with training. The intersectoral partnerships are also part of the Lifelong Learning Action Plan (see also 3.2.1.3.).
- **Priority 4 - Investing in workable jobs and an inclusive labour market:** Flanders' ESF+ programme aims to create sustainable work and promote the well-being of employees in organisations. Actions will be formulated for more workable work, leadership and support for an inclusive labour market.
- **Priority 5 - Social innovation:** through this priority, attention is paid to stimulating social innovation in Flanders and supporting innovative services to strengthen social inclusion, lifelong learning, workable jobs, inclusive education and labour market access.

5.2. ERDF Programme 2021-2027

Flanders receives €505.5 million in funds from the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**, of which €270 million is reserved for the implementation of a regional ERDF programme for Flanders and over €235 million for the implementation of cross-border and transnational Interreg programmes with both neighbouring regions (Interreg A) and more distant partner countries (Interreg B). On top of the local and

regional co-financing which is needed to trigger the use of these ERDF funds , these programmes represent an investment of over €1 billion in Flanders for the next seven to ten years.

The themes of the new ERDF programmes (**ERDF Flanders and ERDF Interreg**) concentrated on the EU and cohesion policy objectives of a **'smarter' and 'greener' Europe**. The programmes are primarily intended to boost Flanders' sustainable growth and competitiveness, while at the same time accelerating the transition to a low carbon, circular and energy efficient economy. Attention is mainly devoted to knowledge valorisation, knowledge transfer, demonstration and the accelerated roll-out of sustainable technologies. The digital transition is also given a prominent place. Particularly in the Interreg context, focus is also placed on climate investment, renewable energy, tightness of the (cross-border) labour market(s), challenges in the care sector and sustainable tourism. The first ERDF and Interreg calls were already launched in 2022 and will lead to the allocation of funds to concrete projects in 2023.

5.3. REACT-EU

Flanders can count on €155 million from REACT-EU (Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe). In addition to the resources provided under the RRF, REACT-EU resources are also being used to realise the **recovery plan for the labour market 'All Hands on Deck'** (Alle hens aan dek) of the Flemish Minister for Work and Social Economy, the Government of Flanders and the Flemish social partners. In the context of the learning and career offensive, REACT-EU is used to finance the job placement bonus (stagebonus). The aim of the job placement bonus recovery measure is to introduce a temporary increase and extension of the bonus for companies offering learning workplaces in difficult circumstances. From 1 September 2023, the job placement bonus will be replaced by the premium 'work-based learning leading to qualifications' (premie 'kwalificerend werkplekleren'). The aforementioned increase and extension will be consolidated in this new premium, as it is important that sufficient sustainable learning workplaces are available to keep dual learning (see 3.2.2.2.) on track. In order to digitally transform Flanders, the REACT-EU funds are used to organise training courses around teleworking as well as around the digitalisation and greening of Flanders' economy. The teleworking projects ended on 30 November 2022. Finally, through REACT EU, we also commit to training courses for the future while examining what competencies will be needed in the various sectors in the medium and long term. This information will be used to develop and test training courses. In line with the European Commission's request, this fund will also be used to deal with the Ukraine crisis.

The **REACT-EU funds under ERDF** contribute to a green, digital and resilient recovery of the economy. Four new calls were launched for this purpose in the following areas: innovative transition, digital transition in the cultural sector, green transition and circular economy. €31.8 million in total was allocated to projects. These include a bio-incubator, a Life Sciences competence centre, circular manufacturing sites, various green heat and residual heat projects and digitalisation actions in the cultural sector.

6. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

6.1. Stakeholder involvement in the FRP

The Government of Flanders attaches considerable importance to increasing public support for the ES. Within the Flemish public administration, the **official ES working group**, in which all policy areas are represented under the chairmanship of DKBUZA, acts as the pivot for monitoring Semester activities at Flemish, federal and European level. The **Board of Chairs (Voorzitterscollege/VOCO)** is committed to the annual dialogue with the EC services. Following the redesign of the ES, with the publication of the Country Report as part of the Spring Package, the exchange of views between the European Semester Officers (ESOs) and the members of the VOCO will take place on 12 June 2023.

Another very good practice is the involvement of the Flemish Parliament in the compilation of the FRP. The draft FRP 2023 was discussed in the Committee for General Policy, Finance, Budget and Justice of the Flemish Parliament on 28 March 2023⁴⁶. An exchange of views with the ESOs following the publication of the 2023 Spring Package will be on the agenda of the General Policy, Finance, Budget and Justice Committee on 27 June. The **social partners** were also involved in the compilation of the FRP 2023 in the context of the Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee (Vlaams Economisch Sociaal Overlegcomité/VESOC) on 17 March 2023.

6.2. Stakeholder involvement in the NRRP

Twice a year, the implementation of the projects from the VV Recovery Plan is monitored comprehensively in a progress report. As a result, the VV projects that come under the NRRP are also being closely monitored. The **recovery committees** (Economic Recovery Committee and Societal Recovery Committee) together with the **climate experts panel** and the **Social and Economic Council of Flanders** (Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen/SERV) issue their opinions on each progress report. These progress reports are used for the monitoring of the recovery plan by the **Management Committee** (Directiecomité), consisting of one adviser per minister's office and the 11 members of the VOCO. The Management Committee prepares the **Task Force**, which is composed of the Government of Flanders ministers and the chairs of the two recovery committees, the Social and Economic Council of Flanders (SERV), the climate experts panel and the Board of Chairs. The Task Force acts as consultative and supervisory body and monitors the implementation of the VV Recovery Plan.

The **Flemish Parliament** is also strongly involved in the VV Recovery Plan, on the one hand through the questions that are frequently asked on the plan's progress in parliament, and on the other hand via the Committee for General Policy, Finance, Budget and Justice⁴⁷, which puts the **six-monthly progress reports** and the **annual audit reports** by the Court of Audit on its agenda each time.

The Government of Flanders actively pursues **policy communication** on the targets and roll-out of the VV Recovery Plan. It uses the separate label 'Flemish Resilience' (Vlaamse Veerkracht/VV) for government decisions linked to the recovery plan. In addition, press briefings take place on the progress of the implementation of the plan and the full monitoring report is published on the website of the Government of Flanders Decisions⁴⁸ and on the Flemish Resilience (VV) website⁴⁹. In terms of **public communication**, the Government of Flanders worked on a follow-up to the first communication campaign⁵⁰ in late 2022. This **second campaign** on Flemish Resilience will start from the **four major storylines** that have been highlighted on the VV website since the June 2022 reporting, viz. energy and sustainability, well-being, digitalisation and sustainable employment. The website elaborates on a selection of VV projects, highlighting them through push communications to the specific **audiences** of each storyline. Following this communication campaign, specific recovery projects are spotlighted through **online videos and web posts**, which are actively disseminated on

⁴⁶ [Draft Flemish Reform Programme 34 \(2022-2023\) no.1 | Flemish Parliament](#)

⁴⁷ See e.g. the Committee meeting of 22 March 2022: <https://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1834609>

⁴⁸ <https://beslissingenvlaamseregering.vlaanderen.be/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-regering/vlaamse-veerkracht>

⁵⁰ <https://overheid.vlaanderen.be/de-vlaamse-veerkracht-een-investering-van-43-miljard-in-elke-vlaming>

social media. The idea is to make it even clearer to citizens what the VV Recovery Plan actually means for each individual and for our society.

GLOSSARY

5G	5th generation mobile networks	DKBUZA	Departement Kanselarij en Buitenlandse Zaken (Flanders Chancellery & Foreign Office)
AES	Adult Education Survey	DOMG	Departement Omgeving (Department of Environment and Spatial Development)
Agenda 2030	Global Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030	EBO	Energiebeleidsovereenkomst (energy policy agreement)
AI	Artificial Intelligence	EC	European Commission
AMECO	Annual macro-economic database of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs	ECOFIN	Economic and Financial Affairs Council
ANB	Agentschap Natuur en Bos (Agency for Nature and Forests)	ECOOM	Expertisecentrum Onderzoek en Ontwikkelingsmonitoring (Centre for Research & Development Monitoring) (Flemish Science, Technology and Innovation System)
AROEPE	At Risk Of Poverty or Social Exclusion	Edu-sprong	Educational Leap (plan for high-quality reinforced adult education in implementation of the Flemish Resilience Recovery Plan)
ASGS	Annual Sustainable Growth Survey	EED	European Energy Efficiency Directive
AWV	Agentschap Wegen en Verkeer (Agency for Roads and Traffic)	e-inclusion	From exclusion to inclusion in the digital world
BBT	Beleids- en begrotingstoelichting (policy and budget explanatory notes)	EPC	Energy performance certificate (F to A+)
BCR	Brussels-Capital Region	EPR	Extended producer responsibility
BIPT	Belgian Institute for Postal Services and Telecommunications	EPSR	European Pillar of Social Rights
BISA	Brussels Institute of Statistics and Analysis	ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
Blue Deal	Plan of the Government of Flanders to fight water scarcity and drought	ES	European Semester
BO	Begrotingsopmaak (budget preparation)	ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
BSO	Beroepssecundair onderwijs (vocational secondary education)	ESO	European Semester Officer
CAW	Centrum Algemeen Welzijnswerk (centre for general welfare work)	ESR	European System of Accounts (budget)
CCS	Carbon capture and storage	ESR	Effort Sharing Regulation (climate)
CCU	Carbon capture and utilisation	ETS	European Emissions Trading System
CCUS	Carbon capture, utilisation and storage	EU	European Union
CE Center	Steunpunt Circulaire Economie (Circular Economy Policy Research Centre)	EU-27	The current 27 EU Member States (excluding the United Kingdom)
CIFAL Flanders	Centre of expertise on the SDGs offering training, coaching and project development	EU-28	The 28 EU Member States (including the United Kingdom)
CIW	Coordination Committee on Integrated Water Policy	EU-SILC	EU statistics on income and living conditions
CO2	Carbon dioxide	EWI	Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie (Economy, Science and Innovation)
CO2-eq	CO2 equivalent	FFM	Fact Finding Mission
COOCK	Collectief Onderzoek & Ontwikkeling en Collectieve Kennisverspreiding (Collective Research & Development and Collective Knowledge Dissemination)	FFTF	Flanders Future Tech Fund
CPE	Charging point equivalent	FIDO	Federaal Instituut voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling (Federal Institute for Sustainable Development)
CS	Cybersecurity	FIT	Flanders Investment & Trade
CSR	Country-Specific Recommendation	FPB	Federal Planning Bureau
CVO	Centrum voor volwassenenonderwijs (adult education centre)	FTE	Full-time equivalent
DESI	Digital Economy and Society Index of the EC	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
DFB	Departement Financiën en Begroting (Department of Finance and Budget)	GIP	Geïntegreerd Investeringsprogramma (Integrated Investment Programme)
Digi-sprong	Digital Leap (digital acceleration for education in Flanders)	GKK	Gemeenschappelijk kwaliteitskader (joint quality framework)
		GWh	Gigawatt-hour
		HERM-REG	Belgian econometric model for drawing up regional medium-term forecasts
		I	Investment
		ICT	Information and communications technology

ILO	International Labour Organization	REACT-EU	Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe
IMCSD	Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development	R&D	Research and development
Imec	Interuniversity Micro-Electronics Centre	REPower EU	European plan for energy saving, clean energy production, and energy supply from different sources
INBO	Instituut voor Natuur- en Bosonderzoek (Research Institute for Nature and Forest)	RIS	Regional Innovation Scoreboard
InnoVET	Innovative programmes in vocational education and training	RIZIV	Rijksinstituut voor Ziekte- en Invaliditeitsverzekering (National Institute for Sickness and Invalidity Insurance)
Interreg A	Cross-border cooperation	RPL	Recognition of prior learning
Interreg B	Transnational cooperation	RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
ISA	Interregionaal Samenwerkingsakkoord (Interregional cooperation agreement)	RRP	Recovery and resilience plan
LEAH	Learning At Home	RTCs	Regional technology centre
LED	Leer- en Ervaringsbewijzendatabank (Database of Qualifications and Professional Experience Attestations)	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
LFS	Labour Force Survey	SERV	Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen (Social and Economic Council of Flanders)
LRM	Limburgse Reconvertiemaatschappij (Limburg Investment Company)	SME	Small or medium-sized enterprise
LTRS	Long-term Renovation Strategy	SO	Secundair onderwijs (secondary education)
LULUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry	SOC	Strategisch onderzoekscentrum (strategic research centre/SRC)
LV	Landbouw en Visserij (Agriculture and Fisheries)	SOIA	Strategisch Overlegorgaan Internationale Aangelegenheden (Strategic Consultation Body for International Affairs)
MATIS	Materials Information System - OVAM data monitoring system	STATBEL	Directorate-General for Statistics
M	Decree containing measures for pupils with special educational needs	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
MOW	Mobiliteit en Openbare Werken (Mobility and Public Works)	TSI	Technical Support Instrument
Mt	Megaton	TSO	Technisch secundair onderwijs (technical secondary education)
MVL	Mijn VerbouwLening (My Renovation Loan)	TWh	Terawatt-hour
NEC	Normaal Economisch Circuit (mainstream economic sectors)	UK	United Kingdom
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training	UN	United Nations
NEKP	Nationaal Energie- en Klimaatplan (National Energy and Climate Plan)	VAPA	Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding (Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan)
NF3	Nitrogen trifluoride	VAPEO	Vlaams Actieprogramma Ecologische Ontsnippering (Flemish Action Programme for Ecological Defragmentation)
NOx	Nitrogen oxides	VBH	Vlaamse Brede Heroverweging (Flemish Broad Review)
NRRP	National Recovery and Resilience Plan	VCO	Vlaamse Codex Overheidsfinanciën (Flemish Public Finance Code)
NSSO	National Social Security Office	VDAB	Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (Public Employment Service of Flanders)
OCMW	Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn (public centre for social welfare)	VEB	Vlaams Energiebedrijf (Flemish Agency for Public Sector Energy Saving)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	VEKA	Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatagentschap (Energy and Climate Agency of Flanders)
OMG	Omgeving (Environment and Spatial Development)	VEKP	Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatplan (Flemish Energy and Climate Plan)
O&V	Onderwijs en Vorming (Education and Training)	VESOC	Vlaams Economisch Sociaal Overlegcomité (Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee)
PJ	Petajoule	VHP	Vlaams Hervormingsprogramma (Flemish Reform Programme/FRP)
PMV	Participatiemaatschappij Vlaanderen (Flanders Holding Company)		
PPS	Purchasing power standard		
PV	Photovoltaic		
R	Reform		

VIB	Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie (Flanders Interuniversity Institute for Biotechnology)
Vision 2050	Long-term strategy for Flanders
VITO	Vlaamse Instelling voor Technologisch Onderzoek (Flemish Institute for Technological Research)
Vizier 2030	Focus 2030 (Flanders' translation of the SDGs into objectives for Flanders)
VLAIO	Vlaams Agentschap voor Innoveren en Ondernemen (Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship)
VMM	Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij (Flanders Environment Agency)
VNIL	Validatie van niet-formeel en informeel leren (validation of non-formal and informal learning)
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VOCO	Voorzitterscollege (Board of Chairs)
VSA	Vlaamse Statistische Autoriteit (Flanders Statistics Authority)
VSDO 4	Vierde Vlaamse Strategie Duurzame Ontwikkeling (Fourth Flemish Strategy for Sustainable Development)
VV	Vlaamse Veerkracht (Flemish Resilience)
VVM	Vlaamse Vervoersmaatschappij De Lijn (Flemish Public Transport Company - De Lijn)
VVP	Vereniging van Vlaamse Provincies (Association of Flemish Provinces)
VVSG	Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten (Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities)
WAM	With Additional Measures
WSE	Werk en Sociale Economie (Work and Social Economy)
WZW	Werkzoekenden zonder werk (unemployed jobseekers)
XR	eXtended Reality

**PROGRAMME DE
RÉFORME DE LA RÉGION
DE BRUXELLES-CAPITALE
2023**



1. Introduction

Cette contribution de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale (RBC) au Programme National de Réforme (PNR) 2023 de la Belgique donne un aperçu des principales réformes et investissements régionaux en mettant l'accent sur les Recommandations Spécifiques par pays 2022, en lien avec les priorités régionales. Les travaux menés dans le cadre du Plan National pour la Reprise et la Résilience (PNRR) ayant été intégrés au cycle du Semestre européen, le présent document examine également de manière succincte les progrès réalisés dans la mise en œuvre des projets bruxellois inclus dans le PNRR, ainsi que les modifications qui ont été apportées pour répondre d'une part à la réduction de l'enveloppe budgétaire belge de 24%, et d'autre part pour intégrer le chapitre REPowerEU.

Le projet de contribution bruxelloise au PNR a été soumis à Brupartners (le Conseil économique et social de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale), qui a rendu son avis le 30 mars 2023, avant son approbation par le Gouvernement bruxellois le 20 avril 2023.

Au cours de cette législature, le Gouvernement bruxellois s'est engagé dans une politique globale ambitieuse en vue de relever les défis sociaux, économiques et environnementaux auxquels est confrontée la RBC. De ce fait, il est nécessaire d'inscrire les différentes mesures thématiques et objectifs stratégiques dans une vision politique cohérente à l'échelle de la Région qui, forte de l'apport des partenaires sociaux et de la société civile, mise sur l'émancipation de tous les Bruxellois, tout au long de la vie, grâce à l'accès à un logement et un emploi de qualité, à des soins de santé accessibles, à un cadre de vie sain et convivial ainsi qu'à des infrastructures publiques et de transport à proximité. Plus largement, les enjeux environnementaux ainsi que les défis imposés par l'urgence climatique exigent des réponses concrètes et collectives, qui s'inscrivent dans une réflexion à long terme, dans tous les secteurs et dans chaque domaine de compétence régionale.

La Déclaration de politique générale du Gouvernement bruxellois pose les bases de la [stratégie GO4Brussels 2030](#) et fait suite à la stratégie GO4Brussels 2025, en y intégrant les priorités du Gouvernement bruxellois actuel, notamment en matière de transition économique, sociale et environnementale. Cette stratégie repose sur une structure comprenant deux axes, eux-mêmes subdivisés en une série d'objectifs :

- Axe 1 : développer une Stratégie de transition de l'économie bruxelloise à l'horizon 2030, qui organise la décarbonisation de l'ensemble des secteurs et renforce son soutien aux secteurs de l'économie circulaire et régénérative, de l'entrepreneuriat social et démocratique et de la numérisation de l'économie ;
- Axe 2 : orienter les politiques croisées emploi-formation sur la question spécifique des qualifications et appuyer les alliances emploi-environnement : construction durable et rénovation, alimentation durable.

La stratégie GO4Brussels 2030¹ est une démarche partenariale avec une vision permettant d'intégrer les différentes initiatives gouvernementales. Elle offre à la fois des outils de pilotage, de suivi, de concertation, de communication et d'évaluation communs.

En ce qui concerne les personnes réfugiées en Belgique suite au conflit en Ukraine, le Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale a mis en place le programme « [Brussels Helps Ukraine](#) » visant à renforcer et coordonner la capacité régionale d'intégration des bénéficiaires de la protection temporaire, dans tous les domaines de compétence régionale.

¹ [Stratégie Go4Brussels 2030](#)

Enfin, une conjonction de facteurs a conduit à une hausse exponentielle des prix de l'énergie sur le marché européen. Pour y faire face, le gouvernement bruxellois a pris des mesures temporaires visant à apporter un soutien aux Bruxellois vulnérables, aux entreprises, aux secteurs public et associatif dans la gestion des coûts énergétiques (à la fois en termes de sobriété, soutien financier et de mesures d'accompagnement visant à réduire les coûts).

2. Contexte et perspectives macro-économiques²

2.1 Activité économique et emploi

La guerre en Ukraine, la crise énergétique et l'inflation élevée pèsent sur la croissance de l'activité économique en Région bruxelloise.

Après la nette reprise économique enregistrée en 2021 (suite à la récession de 2020 liée à la pandémie de Covid-19), la **croissance de l'activité économique** en Région bruxelloise devrait **ralentir** en raison des conséquences de la guerre en Ukraine. Cette dernière a accentué une série de difficultés qui étaient déjà apparues lors de la crise sanitaire, en aggravant les problèmes d'approvisionnement dans certains secteurs d'activité et en renforçant la hausse des prix, en particulier ceux de l'énergie. **L'inflation élevée** (9,6 % en 2022) et la **crise énergétique** pèseraient notamment sur la consommation des ménages ainsi que sur les coûts de production des entreprises et donc sur l'investissement et les exportations. Dans ces conditions, selon les dernières projections régionales, la croissance du PIB bruxellois devrait ralentir à 2,1 % en 2022 et 1,3 % en 2023. Au-delà, la **hausse du PIB bruxellois devrait fléchir** encore, avec une croissance de 1,1 % par an en moyenne attendue entre 2024 et 2027. Au cours de cette période, la croissance de l'investissement sur le territoire bruxellois atteindrait en moyenne 1,4 % chaque année (hors investissement résidentiel).

Encore importantes en 2022, les créations d'emplois en Région bruxelloise devraient rester limitées en 2023 et les années suivantes.

Malgré le ralentissement de la croissance économique, le **nombre de travailleurs actifs** sur le territoire de la Région bruxelloise **a augmenté** de 1,2 % en 2022, un chiffre similaire à celui de l'année précédente. Pour 2023, les projections tablent sur une nette diminution des créations d'emplois, dans un contexte où la croissance de l'activité économique continue à s'affaiblir. L'emploi intérieur bruxellois n'augmenterait ainsi plus que de 0,3 % en 2023. Sur la période 2024-2027, l'emploi intérieur devrait progresser de 0,4 % par an en moyenne. Au total, cela correspond à une création nette de 12 900 emplois supplémentaires entre 2024 et 2027, soit une augmentation annuelle moyenne de près de 3 200 emplois. La grande majorité de ces emplois serait créée dans les secteurs « santé et action sociale » et « autres services marchands » (ce dernier regroupe une grande diversité de services aux personnes et surtout aux entreprises (services informatiques, juridiques, comptables, activités spécialisées, scientifiques et techniques, etc.)).

Les entreprises bruxelloises sont dynamiques

En 2021, **la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale accueille 115.541 entreprises** assujetties à la TVA. Parmi ces entreprises, les entreprises sans travailleur salarié sont majoritaires. Par rapport à 2020, il y a 2.347 entreprises en plus sur le territoire régional, ce qui correspond à une hausse de 2,1 %. Cette augmentation est équivalente à celle observée entre 2019 et 2020 (2,1 %). Le **secteur tertiaire** est particulièrement important en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale avec 97.442 entreprises en 2021. Ce secteur représente 84 % du total des entreprises de la Région alors qu'il n'en représente que 76 % au niveau

² Chapitre rédigé par l'Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse (IBSA). Les données relatives à l'activité économique et au marché du travail proviennent essentiellement des Perspectives économiques régionales 2022-2027, publiées en juillet 2022 par le Bureau fédéral du Plan (BFP), l'Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse, l'Institut Wallon de l'Évaluation, de la Prospective et de la Statistique et Statistiek Vlaanderen. Ces chiffres sont cohérents avec les Perspectives économiques nationales 2022-2027 datant de juin 2022 et n'intègrent donc pas les révisions apportées en septembre 2022 et février 2023 au contexte macroéconomique national en vue de la réalisation du budget économique. Voir aussi le Panorama socio-économique 2022 de l'IBSA (décembre 2022) pour des informations plus détaillées sur le contexte économique, social et environnemental de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, <https://ibsa.brussels/sites/default/files/publication/documents/Perspectiv-PanoramaSocioEconomiq-FR.pdf>.

national. En 2021, les **créations et les cessations d'entreprises** en Région bruxelloise augmentent par rapport à 2020. Chaque année, la Région enregistre davantage d'entreprises qui démarrent leurs activités que d'entreprises qui les cessent. En 2021, il y a ainsi 3.385 créations de plus que de cessations. En 2021, 1.332 entreprises ont fait faillite en Région bruxelloise, soit une baisse de 11 % par rapport à l'année précédente malgré la crise du COVID-19³.

2.2. Démographie et marché du travail

La population bruxelloise a légèrement augmenté en 2021 et l'impact démographique de la guerre en Ukraine devrait rester limité dans le temps.

Au 1^{er} janvier 2022, **la Région bruxelloise** a atteint 1,22 million d'habitants et **n'a jamais été aussi peuplée**. Au cours de l'année 2021, la population bruxelloise a augmenté de 2 700 personnes (soit +0,22 %), poursuivant ainsi l'épisode de croissance qui dure depuis 1996. Cette augmentation reste cependant très faible par rapport aux années précédant la pandémie de Covid-19. Comme c'est systématiquement le cas depuis une dizaine d'années, la croissance démographique en 2021 s'explique par un solde naturel (+6 800) et un solde migratoire international (+17 000) positifs, qui ensemble compensent le solde migratoire interne très négatif (-21 000). Ce dernier reflète principalement une forte hausse du nombre de Bruxellois quittant leur région pour aller vivre en Flandre ou en Wallonie.

La **population de la Région bruxelloise** est **relativement moins âgée** que celle des deux autres régions belges. La part des 65 ans et plus y est sensiblement plus faible, tandis que les jeunes de moins de 18 ans y sont relativement plus nombreux. La Région bruxelloise se distingue aussi des deux autres régions par la part plus élevée de personnes d'âges actifs (18-64 ans).

Selon les estimations du Bureau fédéral du Plan, un peu plus de **63 000 réfugiés ukrainiens** ont été enregistrés en Belgique en 2022, dont **20 % en Région bruxelloise**. Cet afflux important semble avoir gonflé le flux d'immigration internationale et donc la croissance de la population bruxelloise en 2022 (+13 300 habitants). L'impact devrait toutefois rester temporaire puisque l'on fait l'hypothèse que 50 % des immigrants ukrainiens retourneront dans leur pays d'ici 2024. L'effet de la crise ukrainienne s'atténuerait donc dès cette année-là, avec pour conséquence que le solde migratoire international ne suffirait plus à combler le solde migratoire interne très négatif.

Malgré l'impact négatif des crises ukrainienne et énergétique, le chômage bruxellois est reparti à la baisse en 2022.

En 2022, selon les données administratives d'Actiris, la Région bruxelloise comptait en moyenne **86 250 demandeurs d'emplois inoccupés, en baisse de 2,9 %** par rapport à l'année précédente. Cela correspond à un taux de chômage de 15,0 % (-0,4 point de pourcentage par rapport à 2021). Les chiffres du chômage se sont toutefois dégradés entre septembre et décembre 2022, en particulier pour les jeunes de moins de 25 ans. Cette dégradation reflète en outre la baisse de la demande de main-d'œuvre (en raison notamment de la hausse des coûts énergétiques et salariaux) ainsi que l'augmentation des inscriptions comme demandeurs d'emploi de ressortissants ukrainiens suite à l'invasion russe. Malgré le fait que la Région bruxelloise accueille une partie relativement importante des réfugiés ukrainiens, l'impact de cet afflux sur les indicateurs du marché du travail bruxellois devrait rester minime et limité essentiellement aux années 2022 et 2023.

Le taux d'emploi et le taux de chômage bruxellois devraient s'améliorer à l'horizon 2027

³ IBSA, Panorama socio-économique 2022, <https://ibsa.brussels/sites/default/files/publication/documents/Perspectiv-PanoramaSocioEconomie-FR.pdf>

Pour les années à venir, **les projections tablent sur une amélioration du taux d'emploi et du taux de chômage** en Région bruxelloise. Soutenue notamment par la forte augmentation des flux de travailleurs bruxellois sortants (en particulier les navetteurs à destination de la Flandre), la croissance de la population active occupée resterait importante et nettement supérieure à celle de l'emploi intérieur. Dans ces conditions, et malgré l'évolution particulièrement dynamique de la population en âge de travailler, le taux d'emploi (définition UE2020) en Région bruxelloise progresserait de 63,3 % en 2023 à 65,3 % en 2027. De son côté, le taux de chômage (définition BFP) reculerait de 14,7 % à 13,0 % au cours de la même période. La baisse du taux de chômage serait toutefois moins marquée que durant les cinq années qui ont précédé la crise sanitaire. Cela s'explique notamment par le relèvement de l'âge légal de la pension qui donne lieu à une accélération de la croissance de la population active et freine la baisse du taux de chômage.

2.3. Précarité et exclusion sociale

Sur base de l'enquête EU-SILC portant sur les revenus de 2020, **le risque de pauvreté monétaire concerne 25 % de la population bruxelloise** tandis que **35 % des habitants présentent un risque de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale** (indicateur composite combinant le revenu, la participation au marché du travail et la privation matérielle ou sociale). En 2021, les données administratives indiquent qu'environ un cinquième de la population d'âge actif (18-64 ans) percevait une allocation d'aide sociale ou un revenu de remplacement (en dehors des pensions).

Succédant à la crise sanitaire dès l'automne 2021, **la crise énergétique** s'est accentuée en 2022 suite au déclenchement de la guerre en Ukraine. L'inflation a fortement augmenté, avec en particulier une flambée des prix de l'énergie. **La facture moyenne des ménages bruxellois a plus que triplé pour le gaz et doublé pour l'électricité entre 2021 et 2022.** Les indicateurs disponibles ne permettent pas encore de mesurer précisément l'impact de ces poussées inflationnistes sur leur budget. Des chiffres de 2020 indiquent cependant que plus d'un ménage sur quatre se trouvait déjà en situation de précarité énergétique (le fait de rencontrer des difficultés pour satisfaire les besoins élémentaires en énergie) avant même la hausse des prix. L'augmentation des factures énergétiques risque d'accroître les problèmes financiers et de surendettement des ménages bruxellois, notamment pour les plus précarisés pour lesquels ces charges pèsent davantage dans le budget.

2.4. Consommation énergétique et émissions dans l'air

À l'heure actuelle, la source d'énergie dominante pour la Région bruxelloise provient des énergies fossiles. Les principaux consommateurs d'énergie sont le secteur résidentiel (les logements) et le secteur tertiaire. Vient ensuite le secteur des transports. **La consommation finale totale, tous secteurs confondus, a diminué de 14,1 % en 2020 par rapport à celle de 1990** (-9,9 % avec normalisation climatique). Cette tendance à long terme est essentiellement due à une réduction de la consommation des logements. En 2020, la consommation énergétique a atteint son niveau le plus bas depuis 1990. Cette situation exceptionnelle est essentiellement due à la crise sanitaire, mais aussi à des températures hivernales douces

La tendance générale des émissions dans l'air (de gaz à effet de serre, de particules fines, de précurseurs d'ozone et de substances acidifiantes), est à la baisse depuis 1998. Le chauffage des bâtiments et le transport sont les principales sources de ces émissions, même si leur importance relative est variable en fonction des substances envisagées. L'année 2020 est particulière du fait de la crise sanitaire, avec des émissions les plus faibles depuis 1990, tant pour les gaz à effet de serre que pour les polluants atmosphériques.

3. Politiques et approches concernant les principaux développements et défis

3.1 Budget et investissements

Les mesures présentées dans ce chapitre sont ancrées dans la Stratégie **GO4Brussels 2030** par le biais des objectifs « 1.7 approfondir la réforme fiscale », « 2.5 Une fonction publique régionale forte » et « 2.7 Lutter contre les inégalités sociales et garantir l'accès à la santé ». Au niveau du **Socle européen des droits sociaux**, les mesures présentées par les services bruxellois du secteur santé répondent au « Chapitre III : protection et inclusion sociales », notamment les soins de longue durée. Dans le cadre du programme de développement durable de l'ONU à l'horizon 2030, plusieurs actions mises en avant répondent aux Objectifs de développement durable (ODD) 10 (réduire les inégalités) et 11 (villes et communautés durables).

Dans le cadre de l'accord de gouvernement 2019-2024, le gouvernement bruxellois s'est engagé à maintenir une **trajectoire budgétaire stable**, qui garantit un équilibre structurel sans alourdir la charge fiscale globale des ménages bruxellois. Il ne s'agit pas seulement du pouvoir d'achat de la génération actuelle, mais aussi du pouvoir d'achat des générations futures.

Les mesures de soutien que le gouvernement bruxellois a également prises ces derniers mois et années pour faire face à la **pandémie de covid-19** et aux **conséquences de la guerre en Ukraine**, ainsi que les mesures ciblées prises pour l'année 2023 afin de réduire l'inflation ont et auront un impact sur la situation financière de la Région. De plus, l'inflation pèse lourdement sur certaines dépenses telles que les salaires.

Malgré ces évolutions, l'objectif du gouvernement bruxellois reste de revenir à **l'équilibre budgétaire** d'ici 2024, nonobstant un certain nombre d'investissements stratégiques porteurs de croissance.

L'objectif d'équilibre budgétaire semble toujours atteignable grâce d'une part, à l'ajustement automatique des prélèvements de l'impôt des personnes physiques (IPP) et autres dotations de la loi spéciale de financement, et d'autre part, grâce à la meilleure performance qu'annoncé de certains impôts régionaux. Le niveau fédéral reste l'acteur central en matière de fiscalité du travail puisque l'impôt des personnes physiques et l'impôt des sociétés restent à ce jour (principalement) des matières fédérales. Pour autant, la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale prend des mesures qui réduisent la charge fiscale sur le travail, par exemple en supprimant la partie « agglomération » de l'impôt des personnes physiques (1%) en 2016 et a également réduit la partie régionale de l'impôt des personnes physiques (IPP) de 0,5% en 2017. En outre, il est prévu que les processus de rationalisation pluriannuels visant à accroître l'efficacité et l'efficience des dépenses publiques (notamment par le biais de **revues des dépenses**) se poursuivent.

Au niveau des économies des institutions publiques bruxelloises, le gouvernement a validé en mai 2022 le **programme OPTIris** (pour Optimisation de la Performance et de la Transition Institutionnelle), la vision globale, le plan d'approche et la méthodologie proposés. L'objectif d'atteindre 60 millions d'euros d'économies structurelles par an au sein de l'entité régionale a été confirmé à cette même occasion. Un groupe de travail créé dans la foulée a pour objectif d'identifier, en coordination avec les fonctionnaires dirigeants des institutions et des organismes régionaux concernés, des mesures concrètes permettant de réaliser ces économies.

En juillet 2022, une première liste de 105 mesures a été présentée au Comité de pilotage du programme et au Gouvernement. Ces mesures s'articulent autour des 5 axes suivants : politique des ressources

humaines / du personnel ; gestion des bâtiments administratifs à l'échelle régionale ; politique régionale des achats ; gouvernance ; politique financière budgétaire et comptable.

Sur base des mesures présentées, le Gouvernement a identifié les thématiques devant être approfondies et traduites en impacts budgétaires. Suite à ces amendements, le Gouvernement a approuvé en octobre 2022 une note traçant les lignes directrices des économies à réaliser dans les cinq axes susmentionnés.

Tout en prenant garde à ne pas ralentir la reprise économique et à assurer les conditions d'une **croissance durable et inclusive**, la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale continuera également à investir dans la mobilité, le logement social, les politiques d'emploi et la mise en œuvre du Plan Climat. La **Facilité pour la Reprise et la Résilience** sera mobilisée autant que possible pour **financer la reprise**.

En réponse à la **crise de l'énergie**, les primes et les aides à destination des ménages à faibles et moyens revenus ont été augmentées de manière significative. Des mesures exceptionnelles sont également prévues pour répondre aux besoins sociaux liés à la hausse des prix de l'énergie et garantir la continuité des projets initiés grâce au soutien régional. Ces mesures de soutien sont le fruit d'une réponse directe et proactive du Gouvernement bruxellois suite à la hausse des prix. En ce qui concerne la rénovation énergétique des bâtiments, le régime de subsides alloués par le biais de la stratégie Renolution sera encore augmenté en 2023 (voir chapitre 3.4).

En accord avec ses objectifs de développement durable, le gouvernement s'engage par ailleurs dans un processus de transition économique, avec l'adoption de la Stratégie régionale de transition économique, baptisée *Shifting Economy* (voir chapitre 3.3).

Dans le cadre de l'accueil des personnes réfugiées suite au conflit en Ukraine, le Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale a mis en place le programme « **Brussels Helps Ukraine** » visant à renforcer et coordonner la capacité régionale à soutenir les bénéficiaires de la protection temporaire en application de la décision d'exécution 2022/382 du Conseil de l'Union européenne du 4 mars 2022. La méthode de travail adoptée se fonde sur les principes du macro-management et du leadership transformationnel, ainsi que sur les directives relatives à la planification des mesures d'urgence pour l'assistance humanitaire définies par le Comité permanent inter-organisations (IASC) des Nations Unies. Le programme s'appuie sur le système institutionnel bruxellois pour créer des collaborations entre tous les organismes et associations de terrain concernés par les différents secteurs de l'intégration, sans créer des mesures d'exception afin d'éviter tout double standard.

À cet effet, une provision de **100 millions d'euros** a été constituée en 2022 pour financer la mise en œuvre de mesures destinées à favoriser l'accueil des ressortissants ukrainiens. Au total, près de 60 millions d'euros ont été dépensés pour soutenir les mesures en matière de : logement (11.917.649 €) ; mise à disposition d'hébergements collectifs (26.038.029 €) ; aide à l'emploi et à la formation (906.300 €) ; éducation (834.250 €) ; santé (2.897.000 €) ; protection sociale (15.934.411 €) et communication (568.392 €).

Soins de longue durée

La Région bruxelloise met depuis quelques mois l'accent sur les **services alternatifs (services d'aide à domicile, etc.), moins coûteux** que les solutions traditionnelles et permettant aux personnes âgées de continuer à vivre dans le confort de leur foyer. Par ailleurs, Iriscare a renforcé son soutien aux projets d'habitat alternatif pour les personnes âgées de 2020 à 2023.

Une **nouvelle ordonnance** a été rédigée afin de mieux définir les mesures existantes vouées à récupérer les lits inoccupés dans les maisons de repos et à trouver un meilleur équilibre entre les secteurs public, associatif et privé. La nouvelle ordonnance, adoptée fin 2022, vise à remédier à l'inadéquation entre

l'offre disponible d'établissements de soins aux personnes âgées et les besoins réels de celles-ci. L'objectif est de réduire les coûts budgétaires en récupérant davantage de lits inoccupés dans les maisons de repos.

Cette nouvelle ordonnance permettra aussi une meilleure répartition des places disponibles en maisons de repos. L'objectif est de parvenir à un système de répartition garantissant que les besoins d'ouverture de nouveaux établissements ou d'agrandissement d'établissements existants soit déterminés sur base de critères qualitatifs, ce qui n'était pas le cas auparavant. Aussi, ce nouveau programme devrait permettre à terme de transformer des places en maisons de repos en places en résidences pour personnes âgées qui constituent des alternatives innovantes répondant mieux aux besoins de la population âgée bruxelloise.

Dans la même optique, Iriscare a poursuivi son soutien à la mise en place **d'alternatives à l'hébergement** en maison de repos en 2022, plus particulièrement des projets publics d'aide à la vie journalière permettant aux personnes âgées de maintenir un certain degré d'autonomie. L'objectif est d'évaluer la pertinence de ces alternatives et, si nécessaire, d'établir un cadre réglementaire pour les gérer et assurer leur financement.

Plusieurs groupes de travail ont été mis en place au sein du secteur des soins aux personnes âgées et de ses partenaires pour discuter du soutien médical et non médical nécessaires aux personnes âgées dans les maisons de soins, pour trouver des possibles alternatives à celles-ci et définir de nouvelles normes pour les maisons de soins. Ces nouvelles normes seront adoptées en 2023 et devraient entrer en vigueur en 2024.

3.2. Marché du travail et formation

Les **nouveaux contrats de gestion pour la période 2023-2027 d'Actiris et de Bruxelles Formation** ont été approuvés par le Gouvernement bruxellois pour le premier et par le Collège de la COCOF pour le second en fin d'année 2022. Ces deux outils contribueront à **l'engagement pris par la Belgique d'atteindre, d'ici 2030, un taux d'emploi de plus de 80% des personnes âgées de 20 à 64 ans**. Cette ambition répond aux recommandations en matière d'emploi et de formation professionnelle émises par l'Union européenne dans le cadre du Semestre européen et assure la cohérence avec les priorités des outils européens, notamment le Fonds social européen (FSE+).

Le Contrat de gestion d'Actiris définit cinq objectifs stratégiques, sachant que les thématiques de l'égalité de traitement, l'égalité de genre et la lutte contre toute forme de discrimination sont des axes de travail transversaux à ces cinq objectifs. Les quatre premiers sont orientés vers les usagers d'Actiris (chercheurs d'emploi et employeurs), alors que le dernier porte spécifiquement sur le fonctionnement interne de l'organisation. Ils s'articulent autour de quelques lignes de force : l'emploi comme finalité des dispositifs ; le ciblage de l'accompagnement et des services sur base des besoins et profils des usagers ; le souci de la qualité des services au bénéfice de l'emploi des Bruxellois ; la prise en compte des freins systémiques à l'emploi que rencontrent les publics vulnérables, en particulier les discriminations à l'embauche. A ce titre, une attention renforcée est accordée aux chercheurs d'emploi de longue durée pour lesquels une approche intégrée s'avère être une condition essentielle en vue de contribuer à augmenter le taux d'emploi des Bruxellois.

Ces **cinq objectifs stratégiques structurant le nouveau Contrat de Gestion d'Actiris** sont :

1. Proposer une offre de services ciblée et adaptée dans un objectif de mise à l'emploi : le résultat universel visé est la (re)mise à l'emploi des publics prioritairement accompagnés, à savoir : les chercheurs d'emploi indemnisés/indemnisables (flux entrant) ; les jeunes (flux entrant) ; les chômeurs de longue durée ; tout autre chercheur d'emploi désireux d'avoir accès à un accompagnement sur base volontaire.

2. Contribuer à réduire le chômage de longue durée dans une optique d'augmentation du taux d'emploi : mettre en œuvre une stratégie de réduction globale du chômage, en ce compris le chômage de longue durée, qui permette d'agir sur les facteurs à risque et de lever les obstacles de remise à l'emploi.

3. Orienter les chercheurs d'emploi vers des parcours d'accompagnement sur mesure afin de faciliter leur insertion sur le marché de l'emploi notamment dans les métiers qui recrutent : contribuer à l'augmentation générale du niveau de compétences linguistiques, numériques et métiers des chercheurs d'emploi bruxellois au travers des bilans de compétences et de l'orientation en formation notamment vers les métiers qui recrutent ainsi que dans une perspective de transition intersectorielle. Cet objectif vise également à réduire la fracture numérique qui concerne une partie conséquente du public d'Actiris.

4. Améliorer la cohérence de l'offre de services interne et externe afin de mieux couvrir les besoins des différents profils de public : La finalité est de permettre au CE de disposer d'un parcours de (re)mise à l'emploi cohérent et accessible, répondant à ses besoins spécifiques.

5. Garantir une démarche qualité orientée vers les usagers et les collaborateurs : La finalité visée est l'optimisation des parcours des usagers et des collaborateurs, l'amélioration continue des services via

une meilleure prise en compte, notamment, de l'expérience des usagers et des collaborateurs, la gestion des risques ainsi que l'évolution des compétences des collaborateurs dans un double objectif d'employabilité et d'efficacité interne.

Trois objectifs stratégiques structurent le nouveau contrat de gestion de Bruxelles Formation, à savoir :

- 1. Répondre aux besoins des demandeurs d'emploi et des employeurs en garantissant la qualité de chaque étape du parcours de formation menant à l'emploi.**
- 2. Assurer une forte culture de partenariat.** Cet objectif souligne l'importance de renforcer les partenariats avec les acteurs institutionnels à tous les niveaux de pouvoir.
- 3. Assurer une amélioration continue de la gestion des ressources et des politiques d'emploi et de formation.**

D'autre part, l'objectif 2.2 de la **stratégie Go4Brussels 2030** s'attache à « garantir l'accès à un emploi stable et durable pour tous ». Dans ce cadre, un chantier spécifique est dédié à la **lutte contre la discrimination à l'embauche et à la promotion de la diversité**. Les grands principes et droits essentiels repris au sein du Socle européen des droits sociaux (chapitre « égalité des chances et accès au marché du travail ») œuvrant au développement des marchés du travail et de systèmes de protection sociale équitables et efficaces, jouent aussi un rôle crucial en ce sens et visent à ce que **tous les talents bruxellois aient accès de manière égale à un emploi stable et de qualité**.

Reposant majoritairement sur une économie de services en constante mutation, la Région est confrontée à **deux enjeux majeurs : l'inadéquation de l'offre et de la demande** en termes de compétences professionnelles et une **demande accrue de hauts niveaux de compétences dans les domaines linguistique et numérique**. Pour répondre à la problématique de l'inadéquation des compétences qui touche particulièrement les métiers en pénurie, Actiris, a développé des **parcours d'accompagnement sur mesure** afin de mieux orienter les chercheurs d'emploi vers ces métiers à haut taux de recrutement. Ces derniers mois, notamment dans le cadre des accords-cadres sectoriels conclus entre le Gouvernement régional et les interlocuteurs sociaux sectoriels et des Pôles Emploi Formation, des efforts ont été entrepris afin **d'enrichir et de multiplier les programmes de formation** visant à améliorer les compétences des chercheurs d'emploi.

Fin 2022, le gouvernement bruxellois a confié à Actiris la mission de réaliser avec les demandeurs d'emplois un **bilan de compétences** sur base duquel développer un **plan d'action individuel** comprenant des modules d'accompagnement individuel d'orientation professionnelle, d'aide à la recherche d'emploi, d'accès à des formations et/ou programmes d'insertion, d'acquisition d'expériences professionnelles. Le chercheur d'emploi reste acteur à part entière tout au long du processus.

Complémentairement, la **stratégie régionale de Qualification Emploi** sera lancée en 2023 en vue de poursuivre le renforcement du niveau des compétences des chercheurs d'emplois et de répondre aux exigences croissantes du marché du travail métropolitain. Trois axes, assortis de mesures et d'actions ciblées, ont été élaborés en collaboration avec les partenaires sociaux et les acteurs institutionnels actifs dans l'emploi et la formation. Ces axes et mesures veilleront à répondre directement aux défis soulevés par les recommandations spécifiques et concerneront notamment :

- Le **développement de partenariats avec les entreprises** pour renforcer l'identification des compétences actuelles et futures en demande et leur adéquation avec l'offre de formation, le

développement de programmes de formation sur mesure débouchant directement sur l'emploi et les expériences de formation en entreprise ;

- La **sécurisation des parcours de formation vers l'emploi** en renforçant l'orientation et l'accompagnement individualisé des chercheurs d'emplois ainsi que l'organisation de parcours de formation fluides, certifiants et adaptés aux besoins spécifiques des publics les plus éloignés du marché du travail ;

- Le **renforcement des compétences transversales** : soft skills, compétences linguistiques et numériques afin d'atteindre un niveau minimum de base nécessaire pour pouvoir répondre aux exigences du marché du travail.

Toujours en vue de remédier aux pénuries de main d'œuvre et de poursuivre la lutte contre la discrimination à l'embauche, le Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale travaille à **renforcer le cadre juridique des tests permettant de lutter contre les discriminations** et de favoriser l'inclusion. Dans le cadre des priorités partagées de l'Objectif 2.2 susmentionné, on notera encore le travail mené conjointement par le Ministre de l'Emploi et la Secrétaire d'Etat à l'Égalité des chances en vue d'élaborer un plan de « *lutte contre les discriminations à l'embauche et promouvoir la diversité en Emploi* » qui regroupe quinze engagements visant à actionner un maximum de leviers régionaux et à développer des actions innovantes dans le cadre des compétences respectives de chacun et ce, au bénéfice des chercheurs d'emploi et des entreprises.

Un projet d'ordonnance relatif à la **migration économique** a aussi été voté début 2023 qui vise à rassembler les textes de compétence régionale en matière d'autorisations de travail et de cartes professionnelles mais aussi à simplifier ceux-ci pour les travailleurs extra-européens qui souhaitent travailler en Belgique et pour les entreprises bruxelloises qui souhaitent les engager.

En 2023, le Gouvernement bruxellois vise à **moderniser la matière du congé-éducation payé** afin d'en faire un outil de formation efficace tout au long de la carrière et de rendre son accès plus large et inclusif (genre, handicap, formation en ligne, travailleur à temps partiel,...).

La Région bruxelloise travaille également à **améliorer les formations et les conditions qui encadrent les travailleurs du système titres-services** (à 96% des aide-ménagères). En accord avec les ambitions reprises au sein de la Stratégie GO4Brussels 2030 (objectif 2.2.6), cette réforme vise aussi à pérenniser le système en vue de garantir l'emploi de plus de 26.000 salariés, dont plus de 90% sont des salariées.

Enfin, une **évaluation de l'ensemble des aides à l'emploi** (en ce compris les aides à l'emploi spécifiquement adressées aux chercheurs d'emploi et aux travailleurs en situation de handicap) est en cours de finalisation et pourrait mener à la révision de certaines réglementations afin de les adapter aux réalités actuelles du marché de l'emploi et ce, au bénéfice des chercheurs d'emploi éloignés du marché du travail. Ces politiques d'emploi et de formation répondent directement aux objectifs de Développement Durable de l'ONU 8 « travail décent et opportunités économiques » et 10 « inégalités réduites ».

3.3. Entrepreneuriat, innovation, concurrence et numérisation

Les mesures décrites dans ce chapitre contribuent à la mobilisation de l'ensemble des acteurs économiques de la région pour atteindre (i) l'objectif clé de la **Stratégie Go4Brussels 2030**, à savoir réorienter de façon progressive mais prioritaire les mesures régionales (accompagnements, financements, hébergements, commandes publiques etc.) vers les entreprises inscrivant leurs activités dans des approches environnementales et socialement responsables (objectif 1.1 de la stratégie) et (ii) atteindre une économie régionale décarbonée, régénérative, circulaire, sociale, démocratique et numérique d'ici 2050. Les actions numériques représentent quant à elles un objectif important de la stratégie du gouvernement Go4Brussels 2030 (objectif 1.8). Les mesures mentionnées au chapitre 3.3 s'inscrivent également dans les Objectifs de développement durable 9 (industrie, innovation et infrastructure) et 12 (consommation et production responsables).

La **Stratégie Régionale de Transition Economique (« Shifting Economy »)**, projet bruxellois qui fait intégralement partie du **Plan National pour la Reprise et la Résilience (PNRR)**, mobilise l'ensemble des acteurs économiques dans la réalisation d'une économie régionale décarbonée, régénérative, circulaire, sociale, démocratique et numérique d'ici 2050. Cet objectif se matérialise par la réorientation progressive, d'ici 2030, des différents leviers économiques régionaux (programmes d'accompagnement et de financement, hébergement des entreprises, marchés publics, etc.) vers les entreprises exemplaires sur le plan environnemental et social. En majorant, dans un premier temps, les aides économiques (2024), et en les réservant ensuite aux seules entreprises exemplaires (2030), la Région bruxelloise incite les entreprises à entamer dès à présent la transformation de leur(s) activité(s), renforçant leur résilience face aux chocs futurs. De surcroît, la *Shifting Economy* comprend également un important volet sectoriel visant à capitaliser sur plusieurs secteurs clés de la Région afin de renforcer davantage encore leurs atouts compétitifs (construction, industries culturelles et créatives, santé,...).

Cette stratégie comprend de **nombreuses mesures (224)**, tant thématiques que sectorielles. Parmi les mesures d'accompagnement à l'entrepreneuriat prioritaires en 2023, citons notamment :

- La montée en compétences des acteurs bruxellois jouant un rôle de relais de l'accompagnement en matière de transition économique, via la mise en place d'un dispositif de soutien à la sensibilisation, aux formations et au soutien technique ;
- Le parcours d'accompagnement des entreprises à la transition économique, notamment au travers de la réalisation d'un diagnostic « décarbonation » ;
- L'autodiagnostic sur le degré d'avancement des entreprises dans la transition : Mise en place d'un outil de mesure de la transition économique des entreprises, inclusif et objectif, en lien avec les autres outils existants afin d'évaluer leur impact environnemental et social et les inciter à prendre des actions pour entamer/poursuivre leur transition.

Parmi les leviers à activer pour faire de la *Shifting Economy* un succès, **la politique de recherche et d'innovation (R&I)** de la Région bruxelloise est cruciale. En janvier 2023, le Gouvernement bruxellois a approuvé en première lecture la modification des ordonnances visant à promouvoir la R&I et afin d'y intégrer les critères d'exemplarité sociale et environnementale. Ce sont donc quelque **50 millions d'euros annuels de subsides** qui sont réorientés afin de soutenir l'essor de projets innovants dans les domaines stratégiques bruxellois que sont le climat, le bâti, les flux urbains, la santé, l'innovation sociale et le numérique.

Parallèlement, afin de faciliter et de compléter la chaîne de financement des entreprises en Région de Bruxelles-capitale, **Finance & Invest.brussels**, la société régionale d'Investissement de Bruxelles, a été

recapitalisée à hauteur de 131 millions d'euros en décembre 2020. En outre, en 2021, un **fonds de relance** de 80 millions d'euros a été mis en place financé par la Région, la Société Fédérale de Participations et d'Investissement (SFPI) et des investisseurs institutionnels à hauteur. Celui-ci continuera d'investir en 2023 dans le soutien des sociétés dans le cadre de la relance post-COVID. Grâce à la recapitalisation de deux de ses filiales en 2021, Finance & Invest.brussels continuera également en 2023 à financer les sociétés « seed et pre seed » ainsi que les petites entreprises qui composent le tissu économique bruxellois.

Finance & Invest.brussels a également lancé en juillet 2022 des **produits automatisés de garanties et de prêts subordonnés** en vue de faciliter l'octroi de crédits professionnels par les banques en faveur des entreprises bruxelloises. En respectant différentes conditions, la banque décide elle-même, via un processus intégralement numérisé, de l'octroi de la garantie ainsi que du prêt subordonné de Finance & Invest.brussels. S'adressant tant aux PME qu'aux TPE, ce produit permet de soutenir et surtout d'accélérer le processus d'octroi de crédits professionnels. Finance & Invest.brussels continuera à promouvoir ce produit auprès des banques en 2023.

Enfin Finance & Invest.brussels continuera également à promouvoir en 2023 le fonds de transition afin de soutenir les entreprises dans leur transition écologique. Concrètement, les entreprises qui s'engagent dans une profonde transformation de leurs modes de production et de consommation vers une économie bas carbone seront accompagnées par une injection de capital.

Le **soutien au commerce local** est stimulé grâce à des appels à projets facilitant les bonnes pratiques de durabilité et les dynamiques collectives des quartiers commerçants. Des programmes d'accompagnement à la digitalisation avec un accent mis sur les solutions numériques sobres, inclusives, démocratiques et éthiques ont été instaurés, tout comme un soutien au développement d'une logistique décarbonée via vélo-cargo pour la livraison des commerçants et artisans.

Le Gouvernement bruxellois a approuvé en mars 2023 un **avant-projet d'ordonnance simplifiant les règles en matière d'accès à la profession**, afin de faciliter la création d'entreprises, de renforcer l'entrepreneuriat comme vecteur d'émancipation et d'intégration, de créer des conditions plus équitables pour les candidats entrepreneurs bruxellois et de renforcer la position de la Région comme hub entrepreneurial. Cette réforme, dont l'entrée en vigueur est prévue pour début 2024, vise (i) **la suppression complète des connaissances de gestion de base**, qui conditionne actuellement pour les Bruxellois l'accès au statut d'indépendant et donc la possibilité de créer ou gérer une entreprise, (ii) la suppression des compétences professionnelles relatives à cinq professions réglementées (pédicure, massage, technicien dentaire, grossiste en viandes-chevillard et dégraisseur teinturier), qui ont déjà été supprimées à la fois en Région flamande et wallonne, et, enfin, (iii) la simplification des règles relatives à l'exercice et l'organisation des activités ambulantes et foraines. En parallèle à cette réforme, le Gouvernement prévoit un renforcement des dispositifs de formation et d'accompagnement des candidats entrepreneurs.

En matière de **soutien aux entreprises en difficulté**, le Gouvernement bruxellois soutient depuis 2021 un dispositif visant à faire connaître la procédure de réorganisation judiciaire et la médiation d'entreprise. Ces solutions peuvent permettre à une entreprise en difficulté de trouver une solution avec ses créanciers et de poursuivre son activité plus sereinement. Le Gouvernement prend en charge une partie des frais de procédures (avocats, comptables...) afin de faciliter et d'encourager les entreprises à faire appel à ses procédures méconnues.

Sur le volet numérique, les défis sont assez importants tant sur le plan technique qu'économique. En effet, une étude réalisée a démontré le coût de plus en plus important des solutions numériques. Ainsi, le Gouvernement bruxellois a demandé en parallèle une **étude visant à optimiser les dépenses informatiques de la Région**. Elle a permis d'identifier d'importantes économies potentielles. Dans ce contexte, la Région bruxelloise a démarré un programme d'accompagnement de la **transformation numérique des administrations bruxelloises**. Ce programme se décline en plusieurs projets parmi lesquels une nouvelle gouvernance informatique régionale, le *Managed Workplace*, un Bureau Régional des Achats, une Plateforme d'échange de données, ce dernier faisant intégralement partie du PNRR.

Les obligations découlant du règlement sur le **Single Digital Gateway** ont également servi de levier pour accélérer plusieurs initiatives bruxelloises :

- le **catalogue des démarches**, qui offre aux usagers des services publics bruxellois un ensemble de fiches d'information qui donnent une vision complète, structurée et harmonisée, fournie par les institutions publiques régionales et communales bruxelloises elles-mêmes ;
- le **guichet électronique IRISbox**, qui permet aux usagers, citoyens et entreprises, d'effectuer plus de 250 démarches administratives en ligne, au moyen de formulaires interactifs sécurisés ;
- la **plateforme Fidus**, qui permet aux services publics régionaux et locaux bruxellois d'accéder à des données authentiques et à des données personnelles, dans le respect du RGPD et en application du principe *Once Only*. 800 nouveaux échanges de données de ou vers les institutions bruxelloises ont été ouverts en 2022 ;
- le **programme WePulse** pour l'informatisation des collectivités locales, notamment par la mise à disposition d'un socle logiciel commun sous la forme d'une suite applicative unifiée, couvrant la gestion des finances, des ressources humaines, des dossiers d'aides sociales et du CRM (Citizen Relationship Management). Les communes sont invitées à adhérer au programme afin d'implémenter les solutions pour les domaines sélectionnés.

Pour répondre à la demande de simplification et de numérisation des demandes de permis, la **plateforme MyPermit** a été mise en place fin 2020. Désormais accessible tant aux particuliers, qu'aux entreprises, aux administrations régionales ou locales qu'aux organes consultatifs, ce portail unique en ligne pour le dépôt, le suivi ou le traitement des dossiers est devenu l'accès principal pour toute demande de permis (citoyens, personnes morales, administrations). Fin 2022, le nombre de demandes 100% électroniques ont dépassé les demandes en version papier.

3.4. Durabilité, énergie et mobilité

Les défis environnementaux sont nombreux et, face à l'urgence climatique, des priorités d'action doivent être fixées, avec trois objectifs prioritaires : (i) réduire les émissions directes de gaz à effet de serre pour respecter l'Accord de Paris ; (ii) réduire les émissions indirectes de gaz à effet de serre dans un souci d'efficacité globale et de solidarité avec le reste du monde; et (iii) préparer l'adaptation aux effets du changement climatique et restaurer la biodiversité. Ces trois priorités sont complétées par une priorité transversale : la **mise en place d'une gouvernance climatique organisée par l'Ordonnance Climat** – la loi bruxelloise sur le climat adoptée en 2021 dans le cadre de l'objectif 1.1 de la stratégie Go4Brussels 2030. Au niveau local, la Région apporte à 18 des 19 communes bruxelloises un soutien méthodologique pour évaluer leurs émissions de gaz à effet de serre, **élaborer leur plan climat communal** et aligner leurs actions sur les objectifs et les stratégies régionales.

Ceci fait écho aux Objectifs de Développement Durable de l'ONU 7 « énergie propre et d'un coût abordable » ; 11 « villes et communautés durables » ; 12 « consommation et production responsables » et 13 « mesures relatives à la lutte contre les changements climatiques ».

En décembre 2022, le Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale a adopté son projet de nouveau **Plan Air-Climat-Énergie (PACE)**. Le projet relève l'ambition régionale de réduire les émissions de gaz à effet de serre de 47% en 2030 par rapport à 2005 (contre 40% actuellement), en ligne avec le package européen « **fit for 55** » et sa composante ESR⁴ pour la Belgique. Le projet de Plan définit aussi des mesures concrètes qui permettront à la Région d'accélérer la décarbonation par la sortie des énergies fossiles et la rénovation énergétique, mais aussi de devenir plus résiliente à l'horizon 2030. Une attention particulière est portée aux mesures d'accompagnement de la transition et de lutte contre la précarité énergétique. En outre, le projet de PACE reprend les objectifs clés de la *Shifting Economy* (voir *supra*, point 3.3) dont la cohérence sera évaluée lors de la **première évaluation globale des émissions indirectes de gaz à effet de serre** de la Région prévue en 2023.

L'adoption définitive du plan est prévue en avril 2023, après une consultation publique. Sur cette base, le Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale actualisera sa **contribution au PNEC** (Plan National Énergie-Climat) belge, dont le projet doit être déposé auprès de la Commission européenne en juin 2023, avant une version finale en juin 2024.

Dans le contexte de la guerre en Ukraine et de l'augmentation des coûts de l'énergie, le Gouvernement a pris de nombreuses mesures pour aider les entreprises. Son action est conduite par trois objectifs de protection à court terme et de soutien à la transition pour augmenter la résilience face aux coûts énergétiques. Ce sont donc (1) des mesures de soutien direct à la trésorerie des entreprises ; (2) des mesures de protection des entreprises et visant à assurer la continuité de l'activité économique ; (3) des mesures visant à accélérer la transition énergétique des entreprises.

- La mesure phare de ce paquet de mesures de soutien aux entreprises est une mesure d'aide directe. Elle vise les entreprises actives dans des secteurs à forte sensibilité énergétique et impactées par la hausse des prix de l'énergie (gaz et électricité). Cette aide consiste en une intervention de 30% sur les surcoûts entre les moyennes des coûts énergétiques (élec et gaz) 2021 et 2022. Le public cible est donc toute entreprise active dans un des secteurs sensibles énergétiquement (sur base codes NACE TVA) identifiés dans l'étude de l'IBSA sur la sensibilité

⁴ Le règlement actualisé sur la répartition de l'effort établit des objectifs nationaux obligatoires d'émissions annuelles de GES pour les secteurs non inclus dans l'EU ETS.

des activités économiques à la hausse des prix de l'énergie. Cette prime est en vigueur depuis le 13 mars 2023.

- Deux autres mesures de soutien directe à la trésorerie sont les moratoires sur les prêts Missions déléguées et Oxygen de Finance&Invest.brussels.
- La mise en place d'un service de médiation de dettes énergétiques pour les entreprises, coordonné par le Centre pour entreprises en Difficulté hébergé par BECI (Brussels Enterprises Commerce & Industry). Cette mission est une extension du projet de soutien à la médiation et la Procédure de Réorganisation Judiciaire (PRJ) avec une prise en charge de 75% de la facture des médiateurs.
- Le dispositif de soutien psychologique pour indépendants en détresse », coordonné par l'asbl « Un Pass dans l'Impasse – centre de prévention du suicide et d'accompagnement ».
- La mise en place d'une Plateforme d'échange entre les acteurs de soutien aux entrepreneurs en difficulté.
- Le prêt Energy&Reno de Brusoc pour les indépendants et petites entreprises qui investissent dans l'efficacité énergétique (isolation, vitrages performants, ventilation, installation de panneaux photovoltaïques, pompe à chaleur, etc.).
- Le renforcement des primes Renolution pour les ménages mais aussi les entreprises ;
- La création de deux nouvelles primes gérées par Bruxelles Economie et Emploi et complémentaires au dispositif Renolution : une prime à la consultance et une prime aux investissements en vue d'économiser de l'énergie. Ces primes entreront en vigueur le mardi 11 avril 2023.
- Le renforcement du pack énergie avec l'aide de l'UCM et de Bruxeo.
- Le fonds de transition économique adopté par le Gouvernement en septembre 2022.

3.4.1. Rénovation des bâtiments

Compte tenu de sa part prépondérante dans les émissions de gaz à effet de serre de la Région, le bâtiment est au centre du PACE avec des mesures importantes destinées à favoriser le rythme de rénovation. En particulier, le Gouvernement entend **imposer la rénovation des bâtiments résidentiels les moins performants d'ici 2033**. Le Gouvernement entend également **supprimer progressivement l'utilisation des combustibles fossiles dans le secteur du bâtiment**, et plus particulièrement :

- Interdire l'utilisation des chaudières au fioul à partir de 2030 pour le secteur public et 2035 pour tous les secteurs ;
- N'autoriser que le chauffage « zéro carbone » dans les rénovations lourdes, les bâtiments assimilés au neuf (UAN) et les bâtiments neufs pour les permis d'urbanisme demandés à partir du 1^{er} janvier 2025 ;
- Etablir un plan de sortie des énergies fossiles, qui devrait inclure une vision à long terme sur l'évolution du réseau de gaz naturel à l'horizon 2050.

Diverses **mesures d'accompagnement technique et financier** (primes, prêts à taux zéro, etc.) seront également renforcées pour permettre à chacun de réaliser les travaux nécessaires, avec une plus grande attention aux personnes aux revenus les plus faibles.

Le régime des **primes Renolution** 2023 marque la fin des primes pour les installations au gaz (chaudières, chauffe-eau, etc.). Une amplification du dispositif est mise en œuvre grâce à l'augmentation de certaines interventions (isolation toiture, pompes à chaleur,...) et une hausse du soutien dont peuvent bénéficier les ménages aux revenus les plus faibles. En 2022, 14.800 primes ont été octroyées pour un total de 32,6 M€ à la faveur de la rénovation du bâti bruxellois.

L'accompagnement des personnes qui souhaitent réaliser des travaux de rénovation énergétique a été renforcé : les associations du **Réseau Habitat, la Fédération des Centres de Services Sociaux et Homegrade** ont vu leurs moyens renforcés afin qu'ils puissent notamment engager du personnel supplémentaire. Le **crédit ECORENO** permet aux particuliers d'obtenir un prêt avec des taux préférentiels afin de rénover leur habitation. En 2022, 566 demandes de crédit ECORENO ont été introduites pour un montant de 15,9 millions d'euros. Parmi ces demandes, 325 (57%) ont été octroyées pour un montant de 7,7 millions d'euros. 1.768.000 euros sont prévus pour 2023 en prenant en compte que le budget évolue en fonction des taux d'intérêt.

Dans le contexte de la crise énergétique, le « Pack Energie » à destination des PME et des organisations à profit social a quant à lui plus que jamais démontré son utilité et a été renforcé. Initié par Bruxelles Environnement, ce coaching énergétique proposé par l'Union des Classes moyennes (UCM) et l'organisation représentative des employeurs du secteur à profit social (Bruxeo) permet aux bénéficiaires d'obtenir un accompagnement professionnel et gratuit pour faire des économies d'énergie dans leurs bâtiments.

3.4.2. Énergies renouvelables

Des mesures ont été prises pour **accélérer le déploiement des énergies renouvelables**. La modification de l'ordonnance relative au marché de l'électricité (ordonnance « électricité ») vise à stimuler l'installation du photovoltaïque (PV) grâce un **cadre législatif pour le partage** (notamment dans le cadre d'une copropriété), l'échange et la vente de l'électricité autoproduite. Un facilitateur qui accompagne les porteurs de projet a également été mis en place. Le **décret « électricité verte »** a modifié le mode de calcul des certificats verts (via le coefficient multiplicateur) afin de prendre en compte les « éventuels coûts d'exploitation et de maintenance » et ainsi s'assurer que le soutien financier reflète mieux la réalité de l'investissement. La modification du décret relatif aux quotas de certificats verts a augmenté le nombre de certificats verts que les fournisseurs d'énergie doivent racheter, ce qui stimulera également la production d'énergie renouvelable.

Enfin, la Région bruxelloise a lancé « **RenoClick** », un programme complet de **rénovation énergétique à disposition des pouvoirs publics bruxellois**. Elle couvre principalement les projets de rénovation profonde, mais inclut également l'installation de panneaux photovoltaïques. Les pouvoirs publics peuvent opter pour une installation PV financée par un tiers ou financer leur installation sur fonds propres, tout en bénéficiant des avantages des certificats verts et de la revente de l'énergie non consommée. Grâce à ces différentes mesures, le nombre d'installations photovoltaïques en 2022 a augmenté de 66%, passant de 1.647 en 2021 à 2.734 en 2022 (chiffres provisoires).

3.4.3. Système alimentaire durable

Avec la **stratégie Good Food 2** (2022-2030), le Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale pose les jalons d'un **système alimentaire durable** qui aborde l'alimentation dans toutes ses dimensions : économique, sociale et environnementale, et place cette thématique au cœur de la dynamique urbaine.

L'ambition est de développer une **véritable stratégie d'agriculture urbaine** qui rassemble les acteurs de l'agriculture urbaine, de l'horeca, de la transformation et de la distribution, de la formation et de

l'emploi à Bruxelles et dans ses environs autour d'objectifs visant à maximiser la production, la transformation et la consommation d'une alimentation locale, durable et abordable.

3.4.4. Mobilité

Le **secteur des transports** est l'autre grand émetteur de gaz à effet de serre et de polluants atmosphériques à Bruxelles. Le Gouvernement a donc confirmé son intention de poursuivre et accélérer la mise en œuvre du **plan régional de mobilité (Good Move)**.

La sortie progressive des moteurs thermiques d'ici 2035 (et du diesel d'ici 2030) dans le cadre de la **zone à basses émissions (LEZ)**, contribue également à réduire la dépendance globale aux énergies fossiles. Depuis le 1^{er} janvier 2018, la Région est une zone à faibles émissions. Cela signifie que les véhicules les plus polluants sont interdits de circulation afin d'améliorer la qualité de l'air et donc la santé des personnes. Le 30 juin 2022, le gouvernement a définitivement adopté les jalons de la zone de basses émissions 2025-2036 et **la Roadmap « Low Emission Mobility »**, encadrant la sortie du thermique pour les deux-roues, voitures et camionnettes en 2035, pour les bus urbains en 2036. Le lancement de l'appel à projet « Low Emission Mobility » offre aussi un soutien aux entreprises qui réalisent des projets d'installation de bornes de recharge accessibles en permanence au public, aux taxis et à d'autres acteurs de la logistique urbaine.

Ainsi la LEZ concernera progressivement de plus en plus de véhicules (voitures, camionnettes et (mini)bus). À partir de 2025, la LEZ s'appliquera également aux poids lourds, aux cyclomoteurs et aux motos. **SmartMove**, le projet de tarification au kilomètre pour les véhicules légers se poursuit. Une première consultation a été menée auprès des autres Régions et au niveau européen. Le cadre réglementaire est en cours d'élaboration. Un test à grande échelle de l'application est en cours.

Le bilan de la zone à basses émissions 2021 a révélé que, pour être réellement efficace, la diminution des kilomètres parcourus par le trafic motorisé doit s'accompagner de **l'électrification du parc automobile**. Cette évolution est nécessaire pour répondre au phénomène de transfert du diesel vers l'essence et à l'impact négatif des véhicules lourds type SUV. En septembre 2022, le gouvernement a renforcé la législation en matière d'électrification des flottes captives en adoptant l'arrêté encadrant l'immatriculation des taxis qui prévoit une **interdiction de nouvelle immatriculation de taxis thermiques à partir de 2025**. Le 19 mai 2022, le gouvernement a adopté l'arrêté « **exemplarité des pouvoirs publics** » qui prévoit qu'à partir de 2025, tous les véhicules (y compris de deux-roues et, en principe, de bus et camions) acquis par les pouvoirs publics régionaux et locaux, doivent être à zéro émission.

Pour répondre au défi de l'électrification, la Région a également apporté son soutien au déploiement des **infrastructures de recharge**. Le lancement du site <https://electrify.brussels> et d'un facilitateur bornes a ouvert l'accès à l'ensemble des informations nécessaires pour soutenir le déploiement des infrastructures de recharge. La Région poursuit également le déploiement des bornes de recharge pour les véhicules électriques. Début février 2023, on comptait 2.500 points de recharge accessibles au public, avec un objectif de 22.000 d'ici 2035.

D'ici à avril 2024, la Région prévoit **d'augmenter les montants de la prime Bruxell'air** pour les ménages à faibles revenus qui radient leur plaque d'immatriculation. La prime donne accès à de nombreuses alternatives de mobilité active telles que le transport public, le vélo, le partage de voiture. Dans les mois à venir, la Région prévoit également d'accompagner l'effort de décarbonation de certains secteurs cibles à travers notamment le lancement d'un « **Green Deal Low Emission Logistics** » en avril 2023, visant à accélérer la transition zéro-émission dans le secteur de la logistique.

La Région continue par ailleurs à **investir dans les infrastructures pour les piétons et les cyclistes à travers le développement de réseaux piétonniers** (places emblématiques, mail piétonnier, passages piétons sécurisés, ponts/passerelles sur le canal) et l'entretien des trottoirs (5 km de trottoirs entretenus sur les routes régionales en 2021) ; le **développement de réseaux cyclables** (pistes cyclables sur les grands axes, ponts/passerelles sur le canal, connexions avec la Région flamande) ; l'installation de **parkings à vélos** (avec l'objectif de réaliser près de 20.000 places de stationnement d'ici 2026). Fin 2021, on compte **513 km d'aménagements cyclables** marqués ou séparés dédiés aux vélos ou partagés avec les piétons. La généralisation de la **limitation de vitesse à 30 km/h** au depuis 2021 (à l'exception de certains grands axes) contribue aussi directement à une meilleure cohabitation entre les différents usagers de la route : piétons, personnes à mobilité réduite, cyclistes et automobilistes.

Sur la période 2019-2022, **l'offre de la STIB a été considérablement augmentée** (principalement en dehors des heures de pointe - l'offre d'autobus a été augmentée d'environ 25 %), ses tarifs gelés et réduits pour les groupes cibles et les investissements prévus dans le cadre du **Plan Pluriannuel d'Investissement** ont été poursuivis : transformation en cours d'une infrastructure de tram en infrastructure de métro, automatisation en cours de deux lignes de métro, prolongement de deux lignes de tram – dont une en cours –, renouvellement du matériel roulant métro, tram et bus (hybride ou électrique). Fin 2022, le gouvernement a approuvé un **schéma directeur du tramway à l'horizon 2030**, qui prévoit 8 nouvelles lignes de tram.

En parallèle, la Région développe un **écosystème MaaS (Mobility as a Service)**. Une première version d'une application a été testée. Le cadre réglementaire MaaS est développé en parallèle du développement du cadre réglementaire des voitures partagées (renforcer le contrôle des services de voitures partagées) et du covoiturage (faciliter le développement des services de covoiturage).

La concession du système de vélos en libre-service dans les gares (l'actuel système « Villo ») arrivant à échéance en 2026, la Région envisage de mettre en place un **système de vélos partagés en collaboration avec la STIB**. De plus, un meilleur cadre réglementaire pour le cyclopartage est en préparation.

D'ici à 2030, la Région comptera **50 quartiers apaisés** (à faible trafic) qui bénéficieront directement au confort de vie de ses habitants. Des mesures d'apaisement ont été mises à l'étude dans 11 quartiers au début de l'année 2023 et mises en œuvre dans trois quartiers.

La Région compte **113 radars sur les routes régionales** pour les excès de vitesse et le franchissement de feux rouges. En 2023, 27 radars supplémentaires seront installés. La Région finance également **l'usage de 6 à 7 lidar-radars par semaine**, qui sont installés sur les routes régionales et communales.

La **réforme du secteur des services de transport rémunéré de personnes** est entrée en vigueur en octobre 2022. Cette réforme vise à une amélioration du service aux usagers, à une simplification du parcours de formation des candidats chauffeurs ainsi qu'à une simplification administrative. Elle unifie les services de taxi classiques et les services de location de voitures avec chauffeurs (LVC) en prévoyant un statut commun au sein d'un seul et même secteur, tout en tenant compte de la diversification des services pour répondre aux différents besoins des usagers en distinguant notamment les services de taxi « de station » (les taxis classiques) et « de rue » (anciennement dits LVC). Cette réforme instaure enfin une reconnaissance et un encadrement des plateformes de réservation.

3.5. Protection et inclusion sociale

Les crises successives que nous avons vécues ces dernières années, démontrent à souhait que les besoins en matière de cohésion sociale n'ont jamais été si importants. La crise COVID, la guerre en Ukraine ou encore la crise énergétique ont renforcé les inégalités en éloignant encore un peu plus les publics déjà fragilisés des possibilités d'émancipation et nécessité des investissements publics conséquents. Il s'agit de restaurer la vie sociale, la participation citoyenne et de garantir le bon fonctionnement de la démocratie afin notamment de lutter contre l'exclusion et la pauvreté, et ainsi assurer l'inclusion sociale. Les mesures décrites dans ce chapitre contribuent plus largement à l'objectif 2.7 « Lutter contre les inégalités sociales et garantir l'accès à la santé » de la **Stratégie GO4Brussels 2030**. Les mesures mentionnées dans ce chapitre correspondent également aux priorités dans le cadre du **Socle européen des droits sociaux** (chapitre III : protection sociale et inclusion sociale) ; et contribuent aux **Objectifs de développement durable** 1 (pas de pauvreté), 3 (bonne santé et bien-être), et 10 (réduire les inégalités).

3.5.1 Accueil et intégration des ressortissants ukrainiens

Comme déjà indiqué dans le chapitre 3.1, la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale a rapidement mis en place un **programme destiné à renforcer la capacité régionale d'accueil et d'intégration des ressortissants ukrainiens**. Sous le pilotage d'un coordinateur désigné par le Gouvernement, tous les acteurs institutionnels, associatifs, locaux et privés bruxellois ont été mobilisés pour participer à la mise en œuvre d'une stratégie élaborée à partir des standards humanitaires internationaux. **Sept groupes de travail** ont depuis le mois de mars 2022 réuni les opérateurs compétents par secteur d'intégration : (1) le logement, (2) les infrastructures d'hébergement collectif, (3) l'intégration sur le marché de l'emploi et la formation, (4) la petite enfance et l'éducation, (5) la santé, (6) la protection sociale et la prise en charge des publics plus vulnérables et (7) la communication et la mobilisation communautaire.

Chaque groupe de travail sectoriel est dirigé par un haut fonctionnaire et est accompagné par une personne issue de la communauté ukrainienne. À cet égard, la stratégie bruxelloise est particulièrement innovante et se distingue des modèles d'intégration classiques. Ainsi, des référents communautaires assurent le lien entre les autorités publiques et la communauté, permettant de faire connaître les dispositifs mis en place aux bénéficiaires et de les ajuster selon leurs besoins. De surcroît, les bénévoles ukrainiens se sont rapidement organisés en une association sans but lucratif, *Ukraine Voices Refugee Committee*, avec l'appui de l'antenne belge de l'Agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés (UNHCR). Afin de renforcer son activité, la Région a mis à sa disposition un bâtiment qui accueille à présent un centre communautaire géré par et pour la communauté elle-même. Chaque jour, environ 250 ressortissants ukrainiens fréquentent le centre pour y bénéficier d'un soutien administratif, scolaire, psycho-médical, de formations, ou de loisirs.

À la fin du mois de janvier 2023, **près de 10.700 personnes en provenance d'Ukraine étaient inscrites au registre national dans la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale**, soit environ 20 % du nombre total de personnes accueillies en Belgique.

Par ailleurs, le dispositif d'hébergement mis sur pied par la Région a permis d'offrir un abri à tous les bénéficiaires. Les citoyens et partenaires privés bruxellois, soutenus par les pouvoirs locaux, ont été les premiers à **faire preuve d'une grande solidarité** en proposant d'héberger des personnes dans leur logement. À la fin du mois d'octobre 2022, on dénombrait 8.115 places offertes par des particuliers bruxellois⁵. La Région a tenu à soutenir ce modèle d'hospitalité qui est le plus efficace pour l'intégration des personnes : elle a notamment mis à disposition des citoyens et des communes un cadre, une

⁵ Ce chiffre ne tient compte que des places officiellement enregistrées auprès des communes bruxelloises. D'autres réseaux et citoyens solidaires ont également hébergé des personnes chez eux sans le signaler à leur administration.

plateforme informatique et un dispositif d'orientation. Les hôtels ont aussi participé à cet élan de solidarité en proposant d'accueillir des personnes à des tarifs réduits pour des durées d'une à deux semaines, le temps de trouver une solution.

Lorsqu'il n'est plus possible de trouver une place au niveau local, les demandeurs sont accueillis dans des hébergements collectifs créés dans d'anciens bâtiments hôteliers ou des immeubles de bureaux inoccupés proposés par des propriétaires et occupés temporairement par la Région. Des logements modulaires ont aussi été installés sur des terrains vacants. Ces infrastructures sont encadrées par des associations sans but lucratif qui accompagnent la vie en collectivité et orientent au besoin vers les services de soin de santé, d'insertion socio-professionnelle, de protection sociale, d'éducation... Au début du mois de février 2023, neuf centres étaient ouverts, accueillant plus de 300 personnes. À la fin de l'année 2022, le Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale a pris la décision d'étendre la capacité résiduelle dans les hébergements collectifs à d'autres publics sans-abri.

De même, des efforts sont déployés pour **soutenir l'insertion professionnelle et la formation** des personnes fuyant le conflit en Ukraine. Au début de l'année 2023, 2.420 d'entre elles étaient enregistrées auprès d'Actiris, dont 317 avaient trouvé un emploi et 457 suivaient une formation. Les pouvoirs publics veillent aussi à la **scolarisation des enfants** : à la même période, 1.386 enfants étaient inscrits dans l'enseignement primaire francophone et 85 dans le réseau néerlandophone, 580 jeunes dans l'enseignement secondaire francophone et 74 dans le néerlandophone, et 18 enfants suivaient un enseignement à domicile.

Sur le plan médical, un centre d'orientation en soins de santé et d'aide sociale a rapidement été établi pour permettre aux bénéficiaires d'accéder à une aide médicale, y compris en matière de santé mentale, recevoir un service de dépistage et de vaccination et être informé du fonctionnement du système de santé et social belge (notamment l'affiliation à une mutuelle). Des psychologues et assistants sociaux y ont offert un accompagnement aux publics les plus vulnérables (mineurs étrangers non accompagnés, personnes ayant subi des violences physiques, psychologiques, sexuelles ou morales). En 2023, ces activités seront transférées au centre communautaire, un lieu de passage et d'information centralisée pour la communauté à Bruxelles.

Pour veiller à communiquer sur tous les services et aides disponibles, la Région a également créé un site web d'information, helpukraine.brussels, disponible en cinq langues (anglais, français, néerlandais, russe et ukrainien). Des marchés de traduction et services d'interprétation ont aussi été financés pour permettre de faciliter la communication auprès des pouvoirs locaux, écoles, institutions de soins de santé, etc...

La **Commission communautaire flamande (VGC)** accorde aussi l'attention nécessaire à la crise en Ukraine. La déclaration politique 2022-2023 de la VGC met en lumière quelques actions concrètes sur lesquelles la VGC veut se concentrer cette année : outre la guerre en Ukraine, l'attention nécessaire est portée à la crise énergétique, qui suscite beaucoup d'inquiétude et d'incertitudes auprès des Bruxellois et des organismes du réseau N (organismes néerlandophones soutenus par la VGC).

Dans le contexte de la **crise ukrainienne**, la VGC assume son rôle de bâtisseur de ponts à Bruxelles. Pour ce faire, la VGC s'appuie sur la bonne coopération entre le Bon (bureau bruxellois d'accueil des nouveaux arrivants) et N22, le réseau des 22 maisons communautaires de la VGC. La VGC collabore à trois hubs centraux pour les réfugiés ukrainiens arrivant à Bruxelles. Elle est à l'écoute des besoins de ce groupe cible et veille à ce que l'offre néerlandophone à Bruxelles soit accessible aux réfugiés d'Ukraine. Une attention particulière est portée à l'accès à l'aide sociale, aux soins et à l'assistance. La VGC travaille en étroite collaboration avec la coordination régionale de crise, la COCOM (Commission

Communautaire Commune) et le gouvernement flamand pour rendre l'offre la plus accessible possible aux réfugiés d'Ukraine. À l'été 2022, la VGC a également ouvert ses écoles d'été aux Ukrainiens. 161 enfants et jeunes ukrainiens sont scolarisés au sein de l'enseignement bruxellois néerlandophone. Dès la mi-mars 2022, des cours supplémentaires ont été organisés et ouverts aux enfants ukrainiens par le biais du groupe de travail sur l'éducation.

3.5.2 Lutte contre les inégalités sociales et accès à la santé

Comme l'indique la déclaration de politique générale 2019-2024, le Gouvernement souhaite marquer deux virages dans les politiques sociales et de santé : un virage social visant la réduction des inégalités sociales et un virage organisationnel, visant une meilleure organisation des soins et de l'action sociale et garantissant l'accessibilité, la qualité et la durabilité des soins.

Ce double virage est opéré dans le cadre d'une programmation globale incarnée par le **Plan Social-Santé Intégré (PSSI)** bruxellois, commun à la COCOM et à la COCOF, en matière d'action sociale et de la santé. Le PSSI, adopté en juillet 2022, propose un cadre visant à impliquer l'ensemble des services présents sur le territoire pour orienter les politiques social-santé de manière intégrée et cohérente dans une logique de bassins territoriaux et de groupements de quartiers.

Il est structuré autour de 4 axes :

- Améliorer la qualité de vie et la santé et réduire les inégalités sociales de santé;
- Garantir l'accès aux droits et aux services;
- Améliorer la structure et la coordination de l'offre des services d'aide et de soins ;
- Co-construire une politique social-santé intégrée.

Virage ambulatoire

Même si les crises successives ont ralenti ce processus, la désinstitutionalisation et le renforcement de l'offre ambulatoire se poursuivent (dans la logique du virage ambulatoire). Que ce soit via le développement d'équipes mobiles en santé mentale, l'agrément de nouvelles maisons médicales, ou encore le renforcement des services d'aide à domicile.

Plus encore, la réforme de la 1ère ligne d'aide et de soins adoptée à l'été 2022 va permettre d'engager une refonte du secteur. 7,5 millions € y seront consacrés en 2023, et 10 millions € structurels seront investis dès 2024. Ces moyens seront consacrés à la multiplication des Contrats Locaux Social Santé, mais aussi au financement d'infirmier.e.s de première ligne, d'agents de prévention, ou encore des Relais Actions Quartier.

Enfin, des moyens supplémentaires (7 millions) ont été dégagés à l'horizon 2024 pour soutenir le secteur de l'ambulatoire (tel que défini dans le décret relatif aux services de l'ambulatoire 2009). Cette réforme de l'ambulatoire permettra de renforcer les services qui font face à des niveaux de saturation important et à les encourager à travailler davantage ensemble pour développer une offre social/santé intégrée. Le processus menant à cette réforme est largement entamé.

Le Collège Réuni de la COCOM s'attèle également à l'adoption définitive avant l'été 2023 d'un arrêté relatif aux normes d'accessibilité et à l'amélioration de la qualité pour les hôpitaux (concernant notamment la continuité entre l'hôpital et l'ambulatoire). Une entrée en vigueur par étapes entre janvier 2024 et mars 2025 est prévue.

Garantie autonomie

Dans la déclaration de politique générale 2019-2024, le Gouvernement s'est engagé à garantir à toute personne en perte d'autonomie une offre de services et de soins disponible et accessible, lui assurant de garder cette autonomie le plus longtemps possible.

En ce sens, le contingent d'aides à domicile (COCOF et COCOM) a été augmenté de plus de 8% depuis le début de la législature. L'ambition, pour soutenir la garantie autonomie, est de poursuivre l'harmonisation des tarifs entre entités et d'améliorer l'accessibilité des services, notamment en finançant mieux les heures prestées. Une affectation d'1,5 million € a été décidée en faveur de cet objectif en 2023.

Enfin, puisque la garantie autonomie embrasse aussi l'idée que la maison de repos peut être une possibilité, il fallait revoir fondamentalement la manière dont ce secteur évoluait. Après près de 2 ans de concertation, les premières étapes de cette réforme ont abouti ou sont en passe de l'être :

- Entrée en vigueur le 1/1/2023 de la nouvelle Ordonnance dite « maisons de repos »
- Entrée en fonction le 1/1/2023 des nouveaux inspecteurs pour le contrôle et la qualité du fonctionnement des maisons de repos à Iriscare
- En janvier 2023, adoption en 1^{ère} lecture de l'ACR instaurant des sanctions (notamment financières) aux institutions ne respectant pas les normes
- Sont prévues pour l'année 2023 :
 - L'adoption des nouvelles normes d'agrément, modernisées et axées sur la qualité de la vie communautaire en maison de repos
 - L'adoption de nouvelles normes d'encadrement, renforçant le nombre de professionnels autour des résidents ; en particulier du personnel contribuant au dynamisme de la vie communautaire

Ces réformes, concertées au sein des instances d'Iriscare, sont évidemment inspirées de recommandations de la Commission Spéciale COVID.

Lutte contre le non-recours aux droits sociaux

Plusieurs initiatives ont également été prises dans le cadre de la lutte contre le non-recours aux droits sociaux. Afin d'avancer sur le chemin de l'automatisation des droits, un volet « non-recours » a été inclus au processus de concertation entourant la rédaction du Plan Social-Santé Intégré. Dans ce contexte, de nombreuses initiatives ont été prises et un soutien exceptionnel a été accordé aux CPAS afin de les soutenir dans leurs actions visant à lutter contre le non-recours aux droits. Ce soutien a été porté à 28 millions € pour les années 2022 et 2023, dont 8 millions serviront à poursuivre les projets des CPAS visant à lutter contre le non-accès et 20 millions serviront à soutenir les ménages face à la hausse du prix de l'énergie, mais aussi à soutenir les services de médiations de dettes et les services sociaux les soutenant dans l'ouverture de leurs droits.

3.5.3 Égalité de genre

Le gouvernement bruxellois a adopté en décembre 2022 le premier **Plan bruxellois de *gender mainstreaming* et d'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes**. Soutenu par le secteur associatif qui a été largement associé à son élaboration, ce Plan propose 69 actions transversales très concrètes pour assurer une meilleure inclusion de la dimension du genre dans les politiques publiques.

En vertu de l'ordonnance du 29 mars 2012 portant intégration de la dimension de genre dans les lignes politiques de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, le Gouvernement est tenu d'intégrer une attention pour la dimension de genre dans l'ensemble de ses politiques. Force est de constater qu'aujourd'hui encore, cette dimension n'est pas suffisamment prise en compte dans les politiques qui ont pourtant un impact sur l'ensemble de notre vie quotidienne. Que ce soit en termes de logement, d'urbanisme, de déplacement et mobilité, d'emploi, de participation numérique... les inégalités femmes-hommes subsistent et nécessitent un travail transversal.

Les actions concrètes de ce Plan visent à améliorer la prise en compte de la dimension du genre dans toutes les politiques régionales tant lors de leur élaboration, de leur mise en œuvre que de leur évaluation. Le but est de faire de Bruxelles une région plus égalitaire en éliminant les discriminations liées au genre.

3.5.4 Réponses à la crise énergétique

En réponse à la crise énergétique, la Région bruxelloise a poursuivi son soutien complémentaire aux CPAS et élargi l'accès au statut de client protégé pour les ménages le plus précaires, qui leur permet de bénéficier du tarif social, de négocier un plan de paiement plus long avec leur fournisseur, de suspendre les procédures de recouvrement et d'être protégés contre une éventuelle coupure. Le Gouvernement bruxellois a également mis sur pied une fourniture garantie d'énergie, pour les ménages dont le compteur est fermé et qui présentent des dettes chez l'ensemble des fournisseurs. Cette fourniture garantie est demandée par les CPAS, après analyse de la situation. Le Centre d'informations à destination des usagers de l'électricité et du gaz (InforGazElec), qui aide tout ménage (avec une attention particulière pour les ménages précarisés) qui lui en fait la demande à comprendre ses factures d'énergie et à choisir le meilleur fournisseur possible, a vu ses moyens renforcés, afin qu'il puisse engager du personnel supplémentaire, en vue de répondre à l'augmentation des demandes.

L'indexation des loyers fait l'objet d'un encadrement temporaire visant à soutenir les locataires confrontés à la crise énergétique et s'inscrit pleinement dans le programme d'accélération de la rénovation du bâti bruxellois. Le taux d'indexation des loyers varie ainsi en fonction de la performance énergétique du bien concerné : elle est limitée à 50 % pour les logements disposant d'un certificat PEB E et est complètement suspendue pour les logements disposant d'un certificat F ou G.

En outre, en vue de soutenir les ménages précarisés, la Région bruxelloise a créé un **tarif social de l'eau**, accessible à l'ensemble des ménages dont au moins une personne bénéficiaire de l'intervention majorée (BIM).

La COCOM a également dégagé des montants exceptionnels pour l'année 2022, dans le cadre de l'augmentation des coûts de l'énergie (gaz et/ou électricité). Ces moyens sont destinés à couvrir les surcoûts « énergies » des secteurs dits « non marchands » et autres secteurs relevant des compétences de la COCOM (social et santé). Cette aide a pour vocation de répondre au contexte évolutif de la crise énergétique et ce, en proposant un mécanisme en deux étapes dont une avance en 2022. Des budgets sont ensuite prévus pour compléter et/ou affiner la mesure en 2023.

Dans le contexte de la crise énergétique, la VGC travaille aussi à ouvrir une offre territoriale de services de bricolage à domicile afin que davantage de personnes âgées et de Bruxellois nécessitant des soins soient accompagnés pour améliorer leur confort de vie, la sécurité de leur domicile ou leur consommation d'énergie.

3.5.5 Programme bruxellois pour l'enseignement

Enfin, la Région poursuit sa contribution à la **lutte contre le décrochage scolaire** en soutenant les communes et les associations dans la mise en œuvre d'activités favorisant l'accrochage scolaire. Une évaluation des programmes régionaux de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire est en cours. Le **programme régional de rénovation urbaine** « Contrat École », dont l'ambition est d'améliorer l'environnement scolaire à Bruxelles et de renforcer les relations entre l'école et son quartier dans une perspective de cohésion sociale, se poursuit également.

4. ODD: Gouvernance en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale

La Région de Bruxelles-Capitale a défini sa vision pour 2040 en adoptant le **Plan régional de développement durable (PRDD)** – un document stratégique qui s'inscrit comme d'autres dans la poursuite des ODD en Région bruxelloise – en juillet 2018. Le PRDD vise à apporter une réponse appropriée aux défis et aux préoccupations auxquels Bruxelles est confrontée en tant qu'agglomération, notamment l'accès au logement, la diversité fonctionnelle et sociale, les différents types de mobilité ou les questions environnementales. Le gouvernement bruxellois a en outre adopté une série de réglementations visant à la réalisation des objectifs de DD : le Code Bruxellois de l'Air, du Climat et de la maîtrise de l'Energie (COBRACE), par exemple, comprend de nombreuses mesures relatives à l'efficacité énergétique, au développement des sources d'énergie renouvelables, aux transports, à la qualité de l'air et au climat.

Enfin, la région bruxelloise participe à l'élaboration d'un deuxième **rapport national volontaire belge** sur la mise en œuvre de l'agenda 2030. Ce rapport sera présenté à New-York pendant le High-level Political Forum organisé en 2023.

5. Le Plan National pour la Reprise et la Résilience (PNRR) et les fonds structurels

5.1 Les investissements et réformes de la Région bruxelloise dans le PNRR

Au cours des deux dernières années, la **mise en œuvre des réformes et investissements soutenus par le RRF en Région bruxelloise** a réalisé des progrès significatifs par l'atteinte de jalons et de cibles déterminants dans la poursuite des objectifs fixés par le PNRR.

Au niveau des objectifs liés au Climat, à la durabilité et à l'innovation (Axe 1), la Région bruxelloise s'est résolument engagée vers l'objectif de délivrer plus de 8.000 subventions pour des rénovations énergétiques résidentielles et privées à l'horizon 2024 (dont 2.602 sont déjà prévues en 2023) **(R-1.02)** par l'entrée en vigueur du règlement encadrant celles-ci. Suite à l'adoption au Parlement bruxellois de l'Ordonnance électricité définissant la mission de service public de Sibelga tel que le fonctionnement du guichet unique pour les rénovations publiques à Bruxelles, la Région bruxelloise a aussi fortement simplifié les démarches nécessaires en vue de l'objectif de rénovation des 34.000 m² de bâtiments publics dont 610 sont déjà prévus en 2023 **(I-1.08)**.

Des progrès ont également été réalisés au niveau des objectifs de Transformation numérique (Axe 2) par le lancement d'un marché public en vue de la mise en ligne d'une Plateforme régionale d'échange de données **(I-2.10)** vouée à offrir plus de convivialité aux citoyens et aux entreprises en termes d'accès, d'échange et de préservation de données. Poursuivant dans la perspective d'une numérisation accrue des processus citoyens-entreprises **(I-2.11)**, la Région a aussi inauguré une nouvelle plateforme (CRM) facilitant les interactions entre l'administration et les citoyens, les entreprises et entre les administrations entre elles. Par l'intermédiaire du projet FARI **(I-2.14)**, 4 projets pilotes⁶ ont été lancés afin de soutenir les asbl et organisations bruxelloises dans l'utilisation de l'Intelligence Artificielle au profit du Bien Commun. En 2023, une nouvelle équipe pluridisciplinaire viendra renforcer ce projet. ...

Concernant les projets de Mobilité (Axe 3), l'application SmartMove **(I-3.15)** a vu le jour et offre aux bruxellois la possibilité de mieux comprendre et aborder leurs schémas de mobilité en visualisant facilement l'offre des nombreuses alternatives de transport de qualité. En mars 2022, la Région bruxelloise inaugurerait la nouvelle prime Bruxell'Air encourageant les bruxellois.es à échanger leur voiture contre des options de mobilité douce **(I-3.14)**. Alors que les demandes de primes n'ont cessé d'augmenter au cours de l'année, la Région bruxelloise est en bonne voie pour atteindre son objectif de 5.000 demandes avant 2024. Des avancées ont également été réalisées suite à l'adoption d'un arrêté précisant les normes de sécurité applicables à l'installation de bornes de recharge hors-voirie dans la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale **(R-3.05)**, ainsi que d'un plan de livraison de l'infrastructure comprenant la répartition géographique des points de recharge publics à installer à Bruxelles (objectif de 400 bornes d'ici 2024).

En matière de social et vivre-ensemble (Axe 4), la stratégie de (re-)qualification des compétences **(I-4.07)** vise à lever les freins à l'emploi et à renforcer les politiques d'activation, en particulier auprès des personnes vulnérables. La stratégie vise aussi à améliorer les performances et l'inclusivité des systèmes d'accompagnement et de formation. Ces prochains mois, le gouvernement de la Région bruxelloise adoptera les textes réglementaires **(R-4.05)** nécessaires pour lancer la stratégie. Six contrats ont été signés dans le cadre des subventions octroyées à des initiatives d'innovation sociale et 6.000 chercheurs

⁶ Il s'agit des projets SimpLex : Innovation pour la simplification administrative, Stratégie d'intelligence artificielle pour la Région bruxelloise, Bien-être animal et Intelligence Artificielle, Projet sur l'emploi : Matching des profils sur le marché de l'emploi.

d'emplois bénéficieront d'un bilan des acquis et d'une orientation professionnelle systématique axée sur les compétences linguistiques et numériques (I-4.07).

Sur le plan de l'économie du futur et de la productivité (Axe 5), la Stratégie de relance du marché de l'emploi (I-5.05) vise notamment le monitoring des aides à l'emploi, l'instauration d'un fonds régional d'accompagnement des travailleurs en cas de restructuration ou de faillite d'entreprises (Rebond.brussels) ou encore le déploiement du dispositif de soutien à la reconversion ou à la réorientation vers les métiers en pénurie. La Stratégie régionale de transition économique (*Shifting Economy*) (R-5.08) a été approuvée en mars 2022. Elle définit des objectifs à l'horizon 2030 qui reposent sur la coordination entre les acteurs publics et la participation active du secteur privé, comprenant un plan d'action couvrant des domaines d'action prioritaires et mettant en place un ensemble cohérent d'incitations publiques à l'innovation favorables à l'entrepreneuriat pour la transition écologique.

Enfin, concernant l'Axe 6 sur les Finances publiques et l'examen des dépenses, la Région bruxelloise a progressé dans le processus d'intégration de la revue des dépenses (R-6.04) dans le processus budgétaire par le biais de décisions du gouvernement en 2022 qui définissent une stratégie de revue des dépenses et un calendrier. Les projets pilotes de revue des dépenses de mobilité et de logement social ont été achevés. Sur la base de l'analyse des écarts PEFA et de l'expérience des projets pilotes, une note contenant des recommandations sur la manière d'intégrer les révisions des dépenses dans le processus budgétaire a été approuvée au gouvernement en juillet 2022. L'objectif visé est l'intégration systématique des résultats des revues de dépenses dans la planification budgétaire annuelle et pluriannuelle, et ce, donc dès la préparation de la loi budgétaire pour 2024.

Suite à la réduction du portefeuille belge de l'ordre de 24%, conséquence de la reprise économique, mais aussi à la mise en œuvre du nouvel instrument REPowerEU, la Belgique soumettra une proposition d'ajustement du PNRR. Cette dernière contient une série d'adaptations touchant aux investissements et réformes portés par la Région bruxelloise. Ces adaptations n'ont pas été prises en considération au moment de la rédaction du présent chapitre.

5.2 Fonds structurels

Pour ce qui est de la politique de cohésion, l'Accord de Partenariat de la Belgique a été approuvé par la Commission européenne fin 2022. Ce dernier contient un certain nombre de programmes gérés par la Région bruxelloise ou actifs sur son territoire.

5.2.1 Programme FEDER

La Région est tout d'abord autorité de gestion pour le FEDER, qui représente un budget de 121,184 millions d'euros émanant de l'UE, pour un total de dépenses de 303,210 millions d'euros, cofinancement compris. Les consultations relatives au Programme 2021-2027 ont été finalisées en avril 2022. Le Gouvernement a, suite à cela, validé une version modifiée du Programme en juillet 2022. Tenant compte des recommandations et observations formulées par la Commission européenne, le Programme a ensuite été adapté et une nouvelle version notifiée en décembre 2022. Cette dernière a définitivement été approuvée par la Commission le 24 mars 2023.

Le Programme vise les objectifs spécifiques (OS) suivants : 1.1. (innovation), 1.2. (numérisation, des pouvoirs publics selon le Programme), 1.3. (PME), 2.1. (efficacité énergétique), 2.6. (économie circulaire), 2.7. (biodiversité et espaces verts), 4.3. (intégration des publics fragilisés, via le logement selon le Programme) et 5.1. (développement social, économique et environnemental intégré et inclusif).

En parallèle au processus de validation, **la mise en œuvre a débuté pour une partie du Programme**, avec un premier appel à projets lancé fin 2022 (pour l'OS 5.1.) et de nouveaux appels pour une partie des actions soutenues par les OS 1.1. et 2.1.

Les conditions des appels à projets pour les différents types d'actions des OS sélectionnés par le Programme devraient être présentées successivement pour validation au Comité de suivi dans le courant de l'année 2023, avant un lancement, par l'autorité de gestion, des appels en tant que tels et une sélection dans les prochains mois.

En ce qui concerne les instruments financiers, une première version de leur évaluation ex ante a été présentée au Comité de suivi. Elle devra être adaptée avant sa validation, qui permettra ensuite de lancer un marché public afin de désigner un intermédiaire chargé de leur mise en œuvre concrète.

5.2.2 Programmes FSE+

Après son approbation par le Gouvernement régional le 15 septembre 2022, la Commission européenne a adopté le **programme FSE+ « Emploi »** de la Région le 16 décembre 2022.

L'Autorité de Gestion (AG) responsable de la gestion du Programme FSE+ est le Gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale représenté par son Ministre de l'Emploi. Afin d'assister l'AG dans ses missions, le Gouvernement s'appuie sur les services d'Actiris qui joue un rôle de coordination et de gestion quotidienne du programme financé par le FSE+. La répartition des rôles et des tâches entre le l'AG et Actiris est décrite dans un protocole de collaboration relatif à la mise en œuvre et à la gestion du programme FSE+ 2021-2027.

L'enveloppe budgétaire du Programme FSE+ bruxellois pour la période 2021-2027 s'élève à **133 millions €** dont environ 53 millions (40%) proviennent du FSE+ et 80 millions € (60%) du cofinancement régional.

Les moyens du FSE+ en RBC contribueront aux objectifs FSE+ en lien avec les compétences régionales: atteindre des niveaux d'emploi élevés; disposer d'une main-d'œuvre qualifiée et résiliente et préparée au monde du travail (en conformité avec le socle européen des droits sociaux) et soutenir les politiques visant à garantir, en priorité pour les publics moins qualifiés, l'accès au marché du travail et l'inclusion sociale.

Le programme concentrera ses moyens sur les objectifs spécifiques (4.1.) et (4.8.) du règlement FSE+. Ce premier objectif concerne la problématique de l'emploi et de l'employabilité des personnes vulnérables éloignées du marché de travail (personnes peu qualifiées et les personnes issues de l'immigration) et l'insertion socio-professionnelle des jeunes de 18 à 29 ans par la mise en œuvre de la garantie pour la jeunesse. Le deuxième objectif concerne l'inclusion à l'emploi en mettant en place des conditions favorisantes visant à lever les freins à l'emploi des publics à risque d'exclusion. L'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes l'égalité des chances et la lutte contre les discriminations s'entendent comme priorités transversales.

Ces investissements permettront de renforcer les ambitions régionales et de relever les défis dans les domaines de l'intégration professionnelle des demandeurs d'emploi éloignés du marché du travail dans un emploi de qualité, d'amélioration de l'accès à l'emploi des jeunes et de l'inclusion à l'emploi.

La Commission européenne a en outre adopté le **Programme FSE+ 2021-2027 Wallonie-Bruxelles** le 16 décembre 2022, après son approbation par le Collège de la COCOF en février 2022.

Le Programme contribue à :

- corriger les déséquilibres structurels du marché du travail :

- En augmentant le taux d'emploi. Il ciblera notamment les catégories sociales les plus touchées (jeunes, chômeurs de longue durée, personnes faiblement qualifiées, ressortissants d'origine étrangère, femmes, personnes en situation de handicap, etc.) ;
- En améliorant l'acquisition de compétences (de base et à valeur ajoutée) notamment via des formations professionnalisantes, dont l'alternance, en lien avec les besoins du marché du travail, les STEAM et avec les transitions numérique et verte ;

- faciliter l'inclusion sociale :

- Des personnes éloignées de l'emploi, des personnes en risque de pauvreté, dont les enfants, des personnes en situation de handicap ou de perte d'autonomie ;
- Par une école inclusive, enjeu pour l'acquisition des compétences et la lutte contre le décrochage scolaire.

Pour la partie bruxelloise du programme, la COCOF et la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (FWB) se sont accordées la répartition suivante des moyens financiers : 75% de l'allocation FSE+ pour les projets relevant de la COCOF (soit quelques 151 millions d'euros) et 25% pour les projets bruxellois de la FWB (soit 50 millions d'euros).

Au niveau de la COCOF, 91 millions de l'allocation seront consacrés à la mise en œuvre de la priorité 4 relative à la lutte contre la pauvreté, dont la pauvreté infantile et favoriser l'inclusion sociale (notamment à travers l'insertion socio professionnelle). Près de 50 millions seront dédiés à la priorité 1 visant à améliorer l'accès à l'emploi, renforcer la création de son propre emploi et promouvoir l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie tandis qu'un peu moins de 8 millions sont tournés vers la priorité 3 et plus spécifiquement à la poursuite de la mise en œuvre du dispositif bruxellois de Garantie pour la jeunesse (Objectif 2.1 de la Stratégie 2030). Enfin, 2,7 millions concernent les actions contribuant à la désinstitutionnalisation des personnes en situation de handicap (priorité 5).

Les actions soutenues par la FWB à Bruxelles concernent d'abord la prévention et la lutte contre le décrochage scolaire ainsi que la promotion d'un enseignement inclusif (26 millions pour la priorité 3). Plus de 16 millions seront consacrés à la priorité 1 visant à promouvoir l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie. Enfin, un peu moins de 8 millions concernent la priorité 4 visant à favoriser l'inclusion et lutter contre la pauvreté.



Wallonie

Le Gouvernement

**EUROPEAN SEMESTER
WALLONIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE BELGIAN NATIONAL
REFORM PROGRAMME 2023**

30 March 2023



Wallonie

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1. INTRODUCTION

Wallonia's priorities are set out in its Recovery Plan (PRW), which was approved in 2021. It provides for a series of investment and reform measures aimed at meeting the challenges of recovery and reconstruction in Wallonia, by addressing needs related to the triple economic, social and environmental transition.

A joint declaration with the social and environmental partners was concluded in March 2022 to optimise the implementation of the Plan and maximise its results. The declaration identifies a small number of projects in the Plan that are considered priorities and divided into four areas:

- getting out of precariousness ;
- implementing a strong and sustainable economic and industrial policy ;
- improving independence and the energy transition ;
- training.

A co-construction and monitoring methodology involving the social and environmental partners was put in place for the 42 priority projects. These projects are immune at the budget level, in a context in which budgetary priorities need to be recalibrated to address the consequences of the many crises and the reduction of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan budget.

The 2021-2027 programmes of the structural funds have also been validated by the European Commission; they will supplement the work carried out through the Recovery Plan.

In addition, in accordance with the Regional Policy Declaration, the Walloon Government has set up the High Strategic Council (HSC). Its role is to direct governmental action to help achieve the objectives that the Government has set itself in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving the employment rate and reducing poverty. The High Strategic Council has a support role and an advisory role.

2. POLICIES AND APPROACHES TO KEY ECONOMIC EMPLOYMENT MARKET AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

2.1. *Consolidation and sustainability of public finances*

❖ *Budget and public debt*

The Walloon Government is committed to controlling Wallonia's debt level through a structural effort that will change the medium-term trajectory without sacrificing its recovery objectives and its future ability to implement new policies. For this, it will use as a basis the first report of the **External Debt and Public Finance Committee**, which put forward recommendations for a sustainable multi-year trajectory for public finances.

In practical terms, the Walloon Government undertakes to:

- monitor the debt dynamic on a continuous basis ;
- focus on the integrated management of cash flow and the direct and indirect debt ;
- put in place a gradual stabilisation and debt reduction strategy thanks to the ongoing and structural improvement of the gross balance to be financed. The External Debt Committee recommended an improvement of a minimum of €150 million per year.



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The amount of the structural effort must be refined every year depending on the evolution of the trajectory with policies remaining unchanged. Structurally, this effort will result in a stabilisation of the debt ratio from 2024, with a positive turnaround from 2026.

In this way, savings of €400 million have been made since 2021 to reduce the growth of the debt: €150 million in 2022 and €250 million in 2023. This structural work involved the following elements, among others:

- the monitoring and adapting of all expenditure and income ;
- an 8% reduction in ministerial allowances and the controlling of expenditure in all administrations and cabinets ;
- the optimisation and enhancing of the internal and voluntary mobility of public officials ;
- the dynamic management of the Region's financial shareholding ;
- the optimisation of the collection of administrative fines (overloaded lorries, combating environmental crime) ;
- the reform of the employment aid system (impetus) and the business voucher scheme.

This work was also carried out taking into consideration the deteriorating conditions on the financial markets, particularly the rate increases. In this way, Wallonia will limit its need for new loans to €2.5 billion on the financial markets.

For the 2023 budget, the gross balance to be financed was reduced from €4.134 billion to €3.141 billion, an improvement of €994 million in relation to the initial 2022 budget. The ESA balance was €2.57 billion, i.e. €500 million better than in 2022.

The Government's budget trajectory (i.e. excluding expenditure for Covid-19, floods, Recovery, Ukraine and energy) which anticipated a return to balance in 2024, was confirmed. It amounted to -€111 million.

Budget trajectory (excluding expenditure for Covid, floods, Recovery, Ukraine and energy exemption)

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
-€435 million	-€400 million	-€112 million	-€111 million	€0 million

Lastly, as indicated in the context of the NRP reforms, at the end of 2022 the Government decided to set up an annual **spending review** mechanism on the basis of OECD recommendations. This mechanism will aim to evaluate expenditure and the policies implemented.

❖ Tax

The Walloon Government approved the principles of the reform modifying **car tax** to promote the purchase of new or second-hand vehicles that are lighter, less powerful and emit less CO₂. The reform does not provide for any new tax, and the total budget remains the same but is distributed differently, depending on the characteristics of vehicles and their impact on the infrastructure, the environment, or the risks in the event of an accident. The choice of electric and hybrid engines is an advantage in tax calculations compared to petrol or diesel engines. Monitoring will take place every year to ensure budget neutrality.

In addition, the Government plans to abolish the existing road tax discrimination between small thermal and electric motorbikes.



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In terms of **property tax**, the Government has decided to double the allowance for first-time buyers to make it easier for them to access the property ladder¹. The value limits are halved for the allowance for building land or a house under construction or on plan.

In addition, to facilitate the installation of renewable energy sources in public domains often characterised by large unused surface areas (national defence assets, large car parks and roofs, brownfield sites, etc.), the exemption from withholding tax on income from real estate applied to them will be extended to the production of renewable energy on these sites.

It should be noted that the legislative process of the draft Decree has not yet been finalised and that these new allowance measures will not come into force before 30 June 2023.

❖ *Extended care*

To cope with the expected increase in extended care expenditures, a set of measures is being implemented targeting different areas of work: health promotion and prevention, which contribute to the reduction in expenditure, the development and diversification of the supply of alternative places to extended care facilities (50,000 places), and the collection of data to monitor ageing and its impact. The new noteworthy initiatives include:

- digital assistance project to allow elderly people with a loss of autonomy to remain at home. This project, which is part of the PRW, aims to install 15,000 digital assistance devices and train care and assistance personnel as well as recipients in their use. The project will stretch over several years, with a number of analysis and equipment testing phases, the establishment of a service provision model, progressive roll-out, etc. Five operators responsible for making this project a reality were selected in December 2022.
- launch of a call for projects with a budget of €41 million as part of the PRW to create solidarity-based and inclusive housing for people experiencing a loss of autonomy. The objective is to create a total of 135 housing units.
- the ESF+ call for projects for the deinstitutionalisation strategy closed at the end of May 2022. The projects will be selected in the first half of 2023.

2.2. *Employment market and skills*

❖ *Training*

At the end of April 2022, the Walloon and Wallonia-Brussels Federation Governments adopted a joint note on the methodology to be implemented for the transversal improvement of vocational education and vocational training, in particular **dual training, to make it a field of excellence**. The note is based in part on a cross-cutting and factual inventory of vocational education and training, and in part on the identification and definition of different actions to be carried out together, as well as separately, in the short-, medium- and long-term, to boost the dual training sector. This inventory will be presented to the government in the near future and allow priority work areas to be identified.

The short-term approach is already taking shape through the PRW. The Walloon Government has also made several simplifications relating to the dual training convention, traineeships in adult training sectors and business approval. There are also new mechanisms for the other forms of traineeships, in particular the business discovery traineeship. These new provisions

¹ From €20,000 to €40,000 up to a purchase value of €350,000, then degressivity up to a value of €500,000.



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came into force on 1 January 2023. A draft decree modifying the management and payment of family benefits was also adopted in its second reading.

The Government has also adopted a new **Language Plan, with a budget of €2.75 million**. In addition to the promotion of language learning, it primarily targets the development of new "language-business" training. It also provides for the development of language positioning and certification tools, the continued awarding of language immersion grants for job-seekers and students and the creation of a language teaching reference centre in Wallonia. Lastly, a series of actions to combat teacher shortages will be developed.

Different initiatives have also been launched to **respond to the needs of sectors or to shortages**. The 'Urgence Talents' project led by BioWin brings together public and private stakeholders to meet specific urgent needs relating to recruitment and training in the healthtech sector. In the construction sector, in addition to an extensive campaign to promote construction professions, the construction bonus was introduced in January 2022 together with a driving licence voucher. A training and employment collaboration agreement was signed by Defence and Wallonia, with the aim of recruiting 1,000 people a year to the different Defence professions in the coming years.

Several initiatives have also been implemented to **promote the STEAM** fields. The 'A6K/E6K' project to create a digital and technology innovation and training hub at Charleroi Métropole was approved, for a total budget of €105 million (€86.8 million of which is European Commission funding). In December 2022, the Walloon Government also validated seven huge projects to promote job-creating professions, sectors and skills, including STEAM and digital, for a total budget of €650,000. A budget has also been released for the creation of a planetarium on the site of the Euro Space Center at Transinne; it will allow the development of activities to raise awareness among young people of the importance of scientific and technological careers.

Lastly, in the context of the **Brexit** Adjustment Reserve, the FOREM and IFAPME will introduce training in the most badly affected sectors to deal with the growing demand from businesses.

❖ **Active policies**

The "**Territories with zero long-term unemployment**" pilot project, which aims to offer an employment contract to all long-term unemployed people within defined territories, was launched as part of the ESF+ programme, to develop pilot experiences over a five-year period. The focus will be on the socio-economic zones with the highest unemployment rates. A total budget of almost €104 million is planned for the implementation of this new employment policy.

The Government adopted the reform of the aid structures for the creation of self-employment (SAACE). The objective is to improve the services and visibility of SAACE among beneficiaries by generalising the testing of their professional activity and offering more systematic post-creation support and to secure the status of job-seekers throughout the support period by maintaining their social rights. SAACE's funding sources will also be harmonised and restructured.

As part of the response to the **consequences of the energy crisis**, the Walloon Government has adopted two mechanisms: a decree applying additional indexation of the employment promotion aid (APE) and a decree providing for the doubling of the euro per hour of training for job-seekers, from 1 January 2023. In addition, fixed mobility aid - of 450 euros per FTE - is



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being granted to service voucher workers. A budget of 8.1 million euros has been dedicated to this measure.

In the area of work-life balance, in December 2022 the Government selected projects for the creation of 3,568 **childcare places**. This is part of the Plan Equilibre (Balance Plan), which aims to create 3,100 additional childcare places for young children in Wallonia by 2026. The €130 million investment budget also covers the financing of jobs under the APE status to supervise childcare.

According to the estimates of the project leaders, 115 places will be available in 2023 and 278 (cumulative) in 2024. The remaining places will be available in 2025 and 2026.

The objective is to both combat the barriers to employment and training for accessing the employment market and promote a better work-life balance. 700 jobs will be created directly in the childcare facilities.

2.3. Productivity: support policies for entrepreneurship, innovation and digital technologies

❖ Support for SMEs, entrepreneurship and administrative simplification

In January 2023, the merger of the **Walloon economic and financial tools** (SOGEPA, SOWALFIN, SRIW) was completed following the adoption of the decree in Parliament on 19 October 2022. The new company - Wallonie entrepreneur (WE) has been formed and its articles of association approved.

The reform aims to increase and improve the impact of the Region's interventions for companies and the self-employed, by having a single contact person take care of all the needs of the company and entrepreneur and through personalised dossier management. The service offer includes support and financing services that meet specific needs such as company growth, energy transition, technological innovation, internationalisation, turnaround and transfer. WE aims to maximise its power by capitalising on pooling resources. Its unique structure will give it a greater reputation, promoting the lever effect in its ability to provide finance and attract institutional and private investors. WE will have an ambitious ESG policy.

The Government has decided to extend the **'Helping Hand' loan** by two years, making it possible to mobilise private savings to fund SMEs. It has become increasingly successful since its overhaul in 2021: almost 5,155 SMEs and self-employed workers have benefited, which represents a total investment of €38 million.

Within the framework of the PRW, the Walloon Government has decided to step up the IFAPME-WE collaboration with the objective of boosting the creation of enterprises by better supporting the **candidate business leaders** of IFAPME with the help of WE products.

Through the **2021-2027 Structural Funds programming**, substantial resources are planned for direct support to businesses, in terms of both financing and support (more than €461 million), as well as for support to self-employment and business creation, particularly in sectors linked to the double transition (€11.7 million).

In addition, a budget of €505 million has been targeted to support companies hit hard by the **energy crisis**, on the one hand through direct aid, repayment facilities, reduced-rate loans and specific guarantees for companies affected by the sharp rise in energy prices, and on the other hand through aid to companies to compensate for the costs of indirect emissions (carbon leakages). The support measure of €20.5 to improve the energy efficiency of SMEs, introduced



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via REACT EU, will be repeated under the new programme thanks to two measures to support the low carbon transition and the sustainable use of resources (budget of €53.8 million). This support will also be supplemented by the resources from the Just Transition Fund to the amount of €189 million.

Lastly, in the context of the implementation of the **Brexit Adjustment Reserve**, the Government has adopted several measures to support companies whose international activities have been affected by Brexit.

In terms of **administrative simplification**, the Walloon Government has validated a new innovative digital services platform for citizens and businesses - MaWallonie.be. It will be fully deployed by 2024. Its implementation is being accompanied by a project to simplify the processing and payment of subsidies within the Walloon administration.

The Walloon Government has also adopted a series of measures to facilitate the **access of SMEs and VSEs to Walloon public procurement**, including the drafting of simplified and user-oriented special specifications, support for Walloon public authorities and SMEs/VSEs in preparing and responding to public procurement procedures and creating a register of companies.

The Walloon Government approved, in its first reading, the reform of the **Territorial Development Code (CoDT)** in response to the challenges facing our society. The provisions include the repeal of the Decree of 5 February 2015 on **commercial establishments**, with the result that future commercial establishment permits will become planning permits, several improvements to urban planning charges and the dematerialisation of processes, as well as new flood control measures.

In **commercial** matters, the Government has made the revitalisation of central areas a priority. This is the goal of the "Objective Proximity" mechanism approved in April 2022, which offers bonuses for business installation or development in urban or village centres. In addition, in February 2023 the Parliament adopted the reform of the mechanism that grants compensation in the event of works on public roads.

❖ **Digital strategy**

In the framework of Digital Wallonia's CyberWal programme, the Government approved the creation of the **Walloon centre of excellence for cybersecurity**. The Galaxia site will be equipped with two demonstrators: a quantum demonstrator that allows cutting-edge research in the field of encryption, and a Cyber Range infrastructure for simulation and training in cyberattacks. In addition, as part of the **Digital Wallonia for AI** programme in 2022, €4.9 million were released for public bodies and businesses for the implementation of AI projects. Other projects are planned for 2023 and 2024 in the AI and blockchain sectors for an additional €16.55 million.

In the context of the PRW, the Walloon Government approved the **Lifelong digital training** project, whose objectives are infrastructure development and a digital skills training offer. It also indicated its agreement to operationalise the "**A6K/E6K**" project to create a digital and technological training and innovation hub. In addition to the training aspects, the project also aims to support the incubation of start-ups and develop collaborative research and development projects.

The Recovery Plan also amplified the Digital School mechanism, which has become the **Digital Wallonia for Education programme**. This will make it possible to finance the provision of



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digital equipment to Walloon schools and the deployment of WiFi cover in the school buildings of all Walloon schools that request it by 2026.

The Government launched the **Digital 4 Circular Wallonia** programme (annual budget of €1.1 million) which aims to capitalise on digital technological progress to accelerate the circular economy. In addition to monitoring and raising awareness of digital technologies that accelerate the circular transition and promoting best practices, the programme includes calls for projects to increase the integration and use of digital technologies by businesses as part of a circular economy context.

In the context of the **Business Vouchers - "Digital Recovery"** mechanism launched in March 2022 with the support of the ERDF and REACT-EU, phase 3 "strategic implementation" was launched in November 2022. After the diagnosis and strategic action plan preparation phase, it will allow digital tools to be rolled out to SMEs. 20 million euros have been dedicated to this mechanism.

In terms of **territorial connectivity**, following the call for projects launched to local authorities as part of the 2021-2022 agreement protocol between Wallonia and mobile telephone operators (Tax on Pylons, ToP), 168 projects will be financed, for a total of €10 million. Other actions are also planned for 2023, including a "Smart Region" call for projects. The Government also announced the winners of the 'Last Mile' call for projects to equip some of the most complex to connect areas of the country, with a budget of €12.4 million, benefiting 28,000 households. Two additional calls will be launched in 2023 and 2024. With regard to the deployment of **fibre optics**, the fibre optics strategic plan financed through the NRP to the tune of €15 million aims to connect 154 additional business parks to cover 257 of the 292 Walloon parks. These budgets are supplemented by the PRW for the 35 remaining business parks.

In terms of the **supervised roll-out of 5G**, based on recommendations by the independent expert group the Government approved the modification of the emissions standard by introducing a limit of 9.2 V/m - at 900 MHz - per operator and a cumulative limit of 18.4 V/m, while also taking different compensatory measures that supervise and limit the environmental impacts. The Government validated the draft decree in its third reading in November 2022. The Government and the mobile telephone operators also agreed on a charter containing a series of joint commitments. The objective is to move forward within a partnership dynamic for the balanced, harmonious and regulated development of 5G, also compatible with the Region's climate and environmental objectives.

In addition, the first calls for projects to implement **5G proof of concepts (POC)** were launched in August 2022. The objective is to test realistic and practical cases that use full-scale 5G technology. Several themes were selected: industry, health, mobility, logistics and connected rural areas. 19 projects were selected in December 2022. Other calls for projects are planned until 2026 with a total of €15 million mobilised.

Lastly, with the support of the PRW, the **Digital Commerce** programme had a budget of €1 million in 2022 to extend the e-commerce promotion actions and enlarge its target audience, with the support of new partners.

❖ **Research & innovation and industrial policy**

Under the **Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)**, 19 Strategic Innovation Initiatives were finally selected in September 2022 and a launch event was held in November 2022. A budget of €58 million is planned in the PRW to support these initiatives from 2023. The



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implementation of the Strategy is supported by five coordination units for strategic innovation areas for which the funding granted to the Competitiveness Clusters and the Tweed Cluster has been renewed until 2025. As part of the reform of research aid, several calls for projects now focus on the priority areas of the S3.

There are new initiatives for 2023, which are part of the S3 priorities and aim to increase R&D&I work and its use in industry.

The Walloon Government decided to support strategic research through a new technological tool (engineering sciences, chemistry and physics) with the aim of promoting the emergence of disruptive technologies for industrial applications relating to the sustainable transition. A budget of €9.75 million a year is planned. In this respect, WELBIO has been restructured and renamed to create the NPO **WEL Research Institute**, which will comprise two departments: WELBIO (whose activities in the fields of medical biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and veterinary science will continue, with a budget of €15 million a year) and WEL-T (Walloon Excellence in Technology).

In the context of setting up a **health IPCEI**, following a call for expressions of interest in March 2022, three Walloon projects have been selected and were included in the pre-notification submitted to the European Commission in November 2022. The work will continue in 2023 regarding the validation of this first wave of projects. PRW budgets are available to fund this IPCEI. In addition, two Walloon projects are receiving €88 million as part of the **Hydrogen IPCEI**.

Several **themed calls** have been launched, particularly with the aim of improving the strategic value chains in Wallonia. 18 R&D projects have been selected for a budget of €113 million following the "**low carbon**" and "**circular economy**" call for projects launched in the context of the NRP. A '**Defence**' call for projects for €35 million and a 'Space' call were launched. Five projects were selected for the second call, for a budget of €14.1 million. In addition, €16.4 million has been devoted to this industry as part of the Win4Excellence call and €18.7 million is available for the purchase of new research equipment. Phase 2 of the WINGS - Walloon Innovations for Green Sky - project was approved in November 2022 for a 24-month period and with a budget of €41.1 million. Lastly, within the NRP, €7.9 million has been devoted to the creation of a platform of industrial, technological and scientific excellence focused on aircraft recycling. In the field of Defence, Wallonia will also contribute more than €17 million over the next 15 years to the **NATO Innovation Fund** to help businesses to develop disruptive solutions around civilian and military applications. Two Walloon investors are involved in this work: WSL as a start-ups accelerator and A6K as a testing centre for cybersecurity and artificial intelligence in the defence sector, linked with the TRAIL and Cyber Wal projects supported by the Walloon Government. 2022 also saw the strengthening of Walloon capacities in terms of supercomputing equipment, with the financing of the supercalculator LUCIA (Tier1).

In connection with the strategic innovation area '**Agri-food chains of the future and innovative environmental management**', the Walloon Government has also funded several calls: two calls aimed at supporting R&D and investments in the entire local hardwood processing sector in Wallonia (23 projects selected for a budget of €3.7 million), a 'Biodiversity Research' call for projects (seven projects selected for a budget of €1 million), and a second call for projects will be launched in 2023. The Region has also concluded a research agreement with ULiège regarding infectious diseases in wild fauna. In terms of **strategic autonomy**, at the end of October, the Walloon Government approved a "**Food Wallonia**" plan to accelerate the transition to sustainable food by 2025. A budget of €15 million is dedicated to the development of 30 small-scale infrastructures and four emerging sectors (fruit, vegetables,



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cereals and proteins) aimed at supporting all stages of production up to the marketing of a Walloon product. Furthermore, financing will be provided for the construction of five central infrastructures (€30 million) that will ensure the deployment of the sustainable agri-food sector throughout Wallonia. To support the demand for these local products among collectivities, two additional projects to support the agro-ecological transition and support sustainable canteens will take place (€9 million as part of the PRW). The Government has also validated the creation of three food processing logistics centres in Liège, Namur et Charleroi Métropole, for a budget of €16 million. These future logistics hubs are part of the development of short circuits and should be operational by 2024. Lastly, the Government has launched a project to develop the plant protein sector in Wallonia and enable total and circular valorisation.

In the area of **business and investment support**, in May 2022 the Government defined the terms of the new mechanisms for the equipment of business parks, which include the possibility of creating emergency parks and temporary emergency accommodation buildings. In October 2022, following the call for projects, the Government validated the mobilisation of €58 million to accelerate the fitting out of the parks and the creation of the business accommodation infrastructures, with priority given to businesses that suffered during the 2021 floods. In July 2022, the European Commission validated the new regional aid map.

2.4. Low-carbon transition, circular economy, biodiversity and resilience

❖ Low-carbon transition and circular economy

The Walloon Government adopted its new **Air Climate Energy Plan (PACE) 2030** in March 2023. This update is Wallonia's "roadmap" for achieving its 2030 objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 55% compared to 1990. The Plan contains around 250 actions; some 100 are new and the others are taken from various Walloon plans and strategies that are already contributing to the climate objectives.

A first major area of action is to massively renovate buildings, in particular by establishing progressive obligations for the energy performance of buildings, and to improve the energy efficiency of companies. The second area of action involves the development of renewable energies. Wallonia is embarking on a complete phase-out of fossil fuels by 2050 by planning successive stages of replacing coal and oil heating with alternatives, and by stopping all public subsidies to fossil fuels. The third area of action is the transformation of mobility through the reduction of travel needs, the modal transfer and the greening of the vehicle fleet. Other actions in the Plan aim to encourage and extend the sustainable practices of many public and private stakeholders in all sectors. Whether in terms of food, agriculture, training, housing or digital technology, these alternatives also make a positive contribution to other environmental issues, such as the preservation of biodiversity, the improvement of people's health and well-being, the creation of local jobs, etc. They also increase our territories' resilience against current and future climate risks. The PACE is part of a just transition and gender equality approach and contains measures to support households and businesses in accelerating their energy transition.

The Walloon Government has validated the launch to the municipalities of a new call for applications linked to the **local Energy-Climate policy (POLLEC)**. The call closed at the end of January and €32 million is available for this call for projects.

Therefore, measures from the **Just Transition Fund**, with a total budget of €456.5 million, integrated into the Walloon ERDF Programme 2021-2027, will aim to strengthen the low-



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carbon transition in Wallonie by providing support for the construction of hydrogen production units, biomethanisation units, support for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in companies and an aid mechanism for productive investments by SMEs leading to their economic diversification, modernisation and conversion.

The development of the circular economy is a central lever for the transition to a low-carbon economy. In this perspective, the implementation of the **Wallonia Circular Strategy** has continued and led in particular to several calls and initiatives. The "low carbon industry" and "circular economy" call for projects of the NRP (€113 million) is aimed at the development of R&D projects in the priority value chains for metallurgy and construction materials. Between 2022 and 2024, €2.1 million will be dedicated to the development of industrial symbioses within business parks. Several calls are aimed at SMEs and the development of their circularity practices: circular design, Go Circula, Digital 4 CW (€1.1 million per year between 2022 and 2024). Specific actions for priority value chains have also been launched: the creation of a network of circular economy facilitators in the construction sector, support for the development of a Walloon plant protein industry, the establishment of collective support for Walloon textile micro-enterprises, the installation of an aircraft dismantling and recycling unit, the intelligent mapping of the resources and needs of Walloon companies and stakeholders in critical metals, the creation of channels for the recovery of the materials contained in wastewater and the reuse of water for energy storage, and better water management within Walloon companies, in economic activity areas and in the construction sector.

To support the implementation and guide the Strategy, the Government has created a Circular Economy council, an independent opinion body composed of six members of the entrepreneurial, academic and voluntary world. Lastly, the first circular economy fortnight took place in 2022, with the objectives of providing information and awareness for stakeholders, putting them in touch with each other and getting them involved in rolling out the circular economy in Wallonia. The second fortnight is planned for May 2023.

Energy renovation of buildings

The Government has made the **energy renovation of buildings** one of the main priorities of its legislature and the Recovery Plan. In this respect, in July 2022 the Government validated the implementation of several projects, including the **Climate Energy Renovation Alliance (ACER)** whose objective is to create a participatory dynamic to boost both the demand for renovation and the offer of companies. In addition to operationalising the Alliance's governance bodies, the Government has validated the implementation of a tool called the Building Passport. The IT tool for citizens will involve centralising all the information available for a building in a structured way. It will support the building throughout its life. The Government has also validated a performance schedule to be achieved for existing residential buildings, giving a long-term signal and allowing households and businesses to prepare for the necessary decarbonisation of buildings.

In terms of support for the **energy renovation of housing**, the Government has approved the 2022 programming of the ECOPACK/RENOPACK mechanism, with a budget of €84 million, with an additional €6 million as part of the PRW as a result of the energy crisis. €50 million from the Kyoto Fund has also been allocated. The standard budgets will also be added to these budgets. A total of almost €180 million has been granted to the two lending bodies for the 2022 production. The Government has also approved, in its last reading, the draft decree establishing a system of increased aid for energy-saving investments and the renovation of housing. A total budget of €72 million is planned for the 2022-2024 period. This new simplified aid mechanism is complementary to the system of housing bonuses and will allow the



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awarding of grants for roof insulation and for small health and energy renovation works costing less than 3,000 euros, without the need to carry out a prior energy audit.

A research-action (RENO+) project has been launched and aims to consolidate and industrialise energy renovation to help bring all private housing in Wallonia up to an average A label by 2050. It is supplemented by a RENOVATION strategic innovation initiative selected as part of the S3; it aims to deploy new technological and non-technologic solutions targeting the energy renovation of buildings, to achieve a successful transition to climate-neutral housing by 2050.

With regard to the **energy renovation of public buildings**, in October 2022 the Government approved, in its second reading, a decree reforming the UREBA mechanism. The processes for benefiting from the mechanism have been simplified and new forms of energy have been included. In addition, a wider range of works are accepted, with a higher subsidy rate. The reform came into force in November 2022. An annual budget of €7 million has been allocated to this programme. Following the exceptional UREBA call for projects in July 2022, 319 renovation projects will receive a budget of €77 million in subsidies from the PRW and the NRP. The next two waves are planned for 2023 and 2024. The Government has also approved the list of projects selected in the context of the energy renovation of local authority buildings. 98 projects have been selected for a total budget of €103 million (NRP and PRW). The Government has also agreed to a four-year extension of the RenoWatt mission entrusted to B.E.FIN to enhance the energy renovation of public buildings. A PRW budget of €10 million will support this process. New quantitative objectives have been added to RenoWatt, whose impact should double. RenoWatt will contribute to the renovation of 340,000 m² per year, or 1.3 m² over the period 2022-2026, or 170 buildings a year, for a total indicative investment of €340 million. Lastly, the Government has approved the €25 million investment in the energy renovation of more than 100 buildings of the SPW Mobility and Infrastructures.

Lastly, the Walloon Government has decided to simplify the procedures and improve the entire support process for the performance of energy audits in the non-residential sector. The existing mechanisms have been brought together into one (AMUREBA).

Energy

The Government has adopted an order implementing the Decree of 15 October 2020 on **thermal energy**. This decree lays down provisions on metering and the division of responsibilities between the network operator and the heat supplier, to clarify the rules applicable to the different participants in a heat network. To develop heat networks where needed, the local authorities must carry out an opportunity study to identify the potential on their territory. Following a second call for medium-depth geothermal energy projects launched in July 2022, 33 projects were selected for a total of almost €28 million from the PRW. Other actions are planned in relation to deep geothermal energy and mining geothermal energy. In relation to the latter, three studies are underway to determine its potential in the Walloon Region.

With regard to support for **the production of renewable electricity**, in November 2022 the Government adopted in its third reading a decree on **the rate for granting green certificates**. This text reviews the methodology for calculating this rate, to offer renewable electricity producers a stable, more transparent, predictable and precise framework while taking account of the different situations on the ground. This calculation methodology has been notified to the European Commission, whose approval is needed before it can enter into force.



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The Government also agreed on a new **PAX EOLIENICA** to meet the needs of the wind energy sector while taking into consideration the municipalities and residents and preserving biodiversity. The industry's production objective for 2030 has been increased: it must achieve an annual production of 6,200 GWh, after the validation of the Air Climate Energy Plan 2030 in its second reading. In addition, the promoters will be required to open up their projects to the involvement of citizens and municipalities, up to 25% for each of the two parties, which may reduce the number of appeals. The new version of the Pax contains 17 measures, within a simplified and updated frame of reference, a reduction in the total duration of the procedure leading to the final granting of permits, an extension of urban planning permits to 30 years, etc.

More globally, a decree modifying the decrees on **the organisation of the regional electricity market and the pricing methodology** applicable to gas and electricity distribution network managers, with a view to the partial transposition of European directives, was adopted by the Parliament in May 2022 (the Market Design Directive). This modification facilitates the move from a centralised electricity production system using large facilities to decentralised production from renewable sources. The concepts of active client, energy community and energy sharing were added to the text. These new provisions also aim to allow people unable to invest directly in renewable energies to be part of the energy transition and receive electricity at a better price. By giving producers greater certainties, the objective is also to reduce the cost of the renewable production projects concerned. These priorities have been included in the pricing decree to ensure that the pricing methodology and the distribution network prices meet the general interest and the objectives of energy transition and access to energy.

The Government has also adopted a decree on **energy communities and energy sharing**. This text will firm up the renewable energy or citizens' communities and the sharing of energy between active clients within the same building. It will allow the implementation of a new dynamic in the energy sector by specifying the scope of the new concepts adopted in the Walloon "Market Design" decree.

The Government has finally approved, in its third reading, an implementing decree on the procedures for installing **smart meters** and the modalities for awarding grants for the installation of home automation equipment and the installation of a smart meter (also called a dual flow meter).

Mobility

The Government has developed different initiatives to promote the **modal shift**, particularly towards public transport or soft mobility. As of 1 September 2022 (instead of 2023 as initially planned), the TEC subscription now costs 12 euros a year for young people aged 18 to 24. This TEC price (€12/year) is also valid for people aged 65 and over and BIM (vulnerable groups). The Government has confirmed the start of the work to extend the tram from Liège to Herstal and Seraing on the one hand, and the light rail from Charleroi to the Grand Hôpital de Charleroi on the other. It has unblocked €105 million and €60 million excl. VAT from the NRP for these projects respectively. By 2026, more than 600 out of 700 traffic lights will become "smart" lights, improving traffic flow and giving priority to public transport.' This project is funded by the NRP.

The "**Cyclable policy**" decree was adopted by the Parliament on 23 November 2022; it aims to increase the number of cyclable facilities in Wallonia and improve safety for cyclists. It proposes an action plan and financial tools for creating a cycle network, in coordination with



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the Region and the local authorities. The Government has also approved a Cyclable Wallonia 2030 action plan. It is broken down into four themes for which measures must be implemented in parallel (Governance, Networks & Infrastructure, Providing Services and Communication & Awareness) and provides for a structured approach to cycling policy in Wallonia. In terms of investments, the Walloon Government has approved the project to create cycle corridors along the N275 and the E411, linking Wallonia to Brussels, for a budget of €14.73 from the NRP.

The Walloon Government has also approved a new instalment of €90 million in subsidies to Walloon municipalities as part of the drawing right for a **Municipal Active Mobility and Intermodality Investment Plan (PIMACI)**. This plan was launched in 2021 and will reach a total budget of €210 million by 2024. The objective is to create cycling, pedestrian and intermodal facilities through the development and improvement of accessibility to the Mobipoles.

The Government has approved the financing of six new **car-sharing car parks** out of the ten stated in the PRW. This will involve a subsidy of €6.5 million to the SOFICO, out of a total budget of €29.4 million which also involves other car-sharing projects, such as Park 'n' Rides and shared cars. This financing will create 750 new parking spaces by 2025, an increase of 20%.

In terms of **support for the development of electric mobility**, in November 2022 the Walloon Government validated a plan to roll out charging stations. €15 million will be allocated to support the deployment of 6,000 charging points in Wallonia by 2026. A map has been drawn up identifying the 2,324 preferred sites for the electric terminals in Wallonia. The first charging points are expected to be operational by autumn 2023. A decree adopted in early 2023 also introduces a requirement for buildings with more than 20 parking spaces to have at least one charging point.

In terms of **businesses**, the Walloon Government has adopted the relaunch of three complementary mechanisms implemented with the Logistics in Wallonia competitiveness cluster to support companies in any sector with the transformation of their activities and the control of their CO₂ emissions from a logistics point of view. The mechanisms should aid 160 businesses by 2025 (budget of €513,000).

With regard to the development of multimodality, the Government has agreed to grant a subsidy of €5.5 million to implement the project to extend the Trilogiport multimodal platform, with the objective of doubling its transshipment capacity and logistical efficiency. From 2023-2024, work will start to raise four bridges downstream of Liège to allow navigation with an extra level of containers. In addition, more than €40 million from the PRW has been approved to accelerate the remote management of hydraulic structures in Wallonia, to extend the operating hours of the locks and better manage flows.

❖ **Biodiversity and resilience**

In December 2021, in the context of the PRW, the Government approved an **agro-environmental transition plan** for Wallonia, which meets the objectives of the European Farm to Fork Strategy. It is composed of eight complementary actions and led by different Walloon organisations. The objectives are the following: to help restore soil quality, water quality and air quality; to increase the connectivity of the many farms prepared to undertake the agro-ecological transition; to objectify the performances and impact of the agro-ecological practices implemented via research; to evaluate the implementation of a compensation system for sustainable farms, making it possible to set fairer prices for their products. €6 million are planned for this plan over four years. Within this framework, the Government has



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approved the subsidising of 18 farmers' groups selected to strengthen territorial dynamics in agroecology, with a focus on the reduction of pesticides and chemical fertilisers, for a total of €2.1 million. The Government has also approved the third Pesticide reduction programme for the period 2023-2027. The Plan is broken down into 16 measures and 29 actions.

The Government has approved a second "**Resilient Forest**" call for projects. The objective is to make Walloon forests more resilient in the face of climate change and respond to the biodiversity crisis. This programme will continue until 2024, with an annual budget of €3.7 million from the PRW.

The PRW is planning four calls for projects for Walloon municipalities to **make our living spaces green** and adapt to climate imbalances, for a total of €62.5 million. Two calls were launched in 2022, dedicated to the "Green network (for nature) and blue (for waterways)" The "Making districts green" call for projects will be launched in 2023.

The Government has named the two winners of the **Wallonia National Parks** call for projects, which will each receive financial support of €13 million, to which will be added €1.4 million for the development of tourism infrastructures. The Government has also approved the creation of 30 new **nature reserves** and the extension of 23 existing nature reserves. A total of 1,553 hectares are involved. The Government has also decided to strengthen its **network of protected areas**. A budget of €22 million from the NRP is earmarked for these actions, more than €9 million of it in 2022.

Following the floods in 2021, the Government has adopted several measures to **combat flooding**. In January 2022, four studies were launched, including the creation of two guides on best practice for construction and development in flood zones and the management of rainwater, and a multidisciplinary strategic plan for the catchment area of the Vesdre, a sustainable district programme. The 2021 circular on constructability in flood zones will soon be updated with regard to feedback on its application. The Government has approved the second flood risk management plans (PGRI). More than 900 local and supralocal projects and 47 global measures are listed, covering every aspect of flood management: prevention, protection, preparation, repair and post-crisis analysis. In the context of the NRP, the Government has approved the implementation of the project for the redirection of waterways, expansion zones, rising levels and temporary immersion zones (ZIT) to combat flooding and the risks of water shortage. A call for projects in three successive phases in 2022 and 2023 will be launched for municipalities, provinces, natural parks, river contracts, intermunicipalities and nature conservation associations. Lastly, the Government approved, in its first reading, the reform of the Territorial Development Code (CoDT), which proposes new measures for combating floods and incorporates the recommendations of the parliamentary committee of enquiry charged with examining the causes and evaluating the management of floods in July 2021.

For **drought** management, the Government has approved the granting of a €4 million subsidy to the Société wallonne des Eaux (SWDE), to partially finance the studies and work required to secure the water supply of southern Wallonia. The outlook for water demand was reviewed, the perimeter of the area to be secured was expanded and the priority infrastructure was updated. The change of priorities does not change the implementation deadline for securing this area, set at 2029. In total, this work will secure almost 20,000 connections in seven municipalities, for an estimated budget of €17 million.



2.5. Cohesion and social inclusion

❖ Housing

In terms of housing, the Government has continued its policy of supporting housing for more vulnerable groups and has also taken several measures to facilitate access to housing and reduce energy bills.

The Walloon Government has adopted the draft decree on the granting of a **rent allowance and an energy grant** to certain candidates on the allocation of public housing rented by a public service housing company. The Government has also approved the draft decree introducing an aid mechanism for the **replacement of a heating system**, removing the obligation to perform a prior energy audit. In addition, to boost the more global energy renovation of a building, the grant for carrying out an energy audit has been increased.

The Government has approved the creation of 801 high-performance **public housing units** for a total of €137 million, of which €60 million is financed by the European Union. The Government has extended the scope of intervention of social and property agents (AIS), allowing them to manage **student housing**. The objectives are to reach 200 student housing units managed by AIS in 2023, 300 in 2024 and to continue this mechanism over time. The Government also adopted, in its first reading, a draft decree to **combat discrimination** in access to housing, allowing the carrying out of anonymous checks.

A call for projects to create solidarity and alternative housing for **people with a loss of autonomy** was launched in the framework of the PRW for a total of almost €41 million aimed at creating nine housing projects, each with 15 inclusive housing units, i.e. 135 units in total. This housing will be equipped with the latest technology for people with a loss of autonomy.

In this respect, the Government has agreed to a package of 30 million euros for the creation and renovation of 901 **reception or housing spaces** for people experiencing serious difficulties. In practical terms, of these 901 spaces, 751 are for the daytime reception or accommodation of people who are experiencing serious difficulties or are homeless. 150 places are also specifically intended for women who are victims of violence. This new construction plan will continue until 2026. To recognise these structures and create a complete daytime reception network in Wallonia, the Walloon Government has approved a draft decree on the organisation and sustainable financing of these services.

The Government has finally approved the creation of **the Walloon Homeless Observatory (OWSA)** with a budget of €25 million from the PRW. This will provide quantitative and qualitative data on homeless people, ensure the follow-up of a global strategy to combat high levels of insecurity and, most importantly, improve policies in this respect, after the analysis of life courses.

With regard to the **reception of Ukrainian refugees**, a reception coordination unit was created in March 2022. The Government has developed a strategy for mobilising the supply of public and private housing. A budget of €3.57 million has been released to support the local authorities. In February 2023, there were approximately 11,000 people from Ukraine in Wallonia. Approved accommodation centres opened in early summer 2022, offering refugees a transitional housing solution between living with an individual and accommodation in the traditional rental market. 33 centres were approved in February 2023, of which 90% offered open housing, with a total capacity of 1,405 places. With regard to integration, since 29 September 2022 there has been a new category of exemption from the obligation to follow the integration programme for people receiving temporary protection and their family



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members. However, this free mechanism remains accessible to everyone, regardless of their residency status.

❖ **Poverty reduction**

The Government has launched a call for projects to support the introduction of **local actions for escaping poverty and support for people in vulnerable situations**. This call closed at the end of January 2023. Wallonia's support is set at a maximum of €300,000 per project.

The Government has decided on a new measure to combat **water shortages**. From now on, the installation of water flow rate limiters will only be authorised after an investigation by the public centre for social welfare, which will have 90 days to decide on the installation of a water flow rate limiter, whose minimum flow rate will be increased. Specific measures have also been taken for people who suffered from the floods last summer. A budget of €3.8 million has been released to help uninsured flood victims who have to carry out internal repairs to water-related installations.

In terms of the **energy shortage**, the status of protected client, adopted in the context of the Covid-19 crisis, has been extended until August 2023. Households affected by a period of temporary unemployment or self-employed people receiving bridging aid during the energy price crisis have been added to the mechanism and may request this status during a payment default situation. In addition, on 1 January, the procedures applicable in an electricity or gas **payment default situation** changed. The suspension of the supply of a client who cannot pay is now dependent on the decision of a judge. The information given to a client regarding their options for paying their bill has also been improved under the new provisions. In addition, the Government has awarded a subsidy of €435,000 to the NPO "Walloon Network for **sustainable access to energy** (RWADE)" for a range of actions to combat energy poverty and for the support service for vulnerable consumers for 2023 and 2024.

The Government has decided to allocate an exceptional budget of €10 million to increase **urgent food aid** and deal with the growing demand due to the loss of purchasing power. This amount is divided into two parts: €2 million in 2022 and €8 million in 2023. 184 applications have been selected following a call for projects for local operators.

3. USE OF EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS

The first ERDF/ESF+ call for projects for public operators was launched in March 2022 and closed in May 2022. The analysis of the ERDF and ESF+ projects by independent experts is underway and should lead to Government decisions in the first half of 2023. The partnership agreement and the ERDF/JTF and ESF programmes were approved by the Commission at the end of 2022.

The ERDF programme contains a new area dedicated to the Just Transition Fund (JTF), whose specific modalities must be adopted by the Government. On this basis, a call for projects will be launched in the first half of 2023. With total European funding of around **€595 million for the ERDF and** 183 million for the JTF, the 2021-2027 programme aims to create a smarter and more competitive Wallonia that is greener, more connected, more social, closer to citizens and focused on a just transition, consistent with the other regional development policies

The supportive measures for businesses will be activated in 2023.

With regard to the **ESF+**, the ESF+ programme (Wallonia-WBF-COCOF) has a budget of €749 million for Wallonia.



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Wallonia's budget for territorial cooperation is €134.4 million.

Cross-border cooperation programmes were approved at the end of 2022. These programmes will have an ERDF budget of:

- €286.9 million for the France-Wallonia-Flanders 2021-2027 programme;
- €181.9 million for the Greater Region 2021-2027 programme;
- €125.6 million for the Meuse-Rhine programme.

The call for projects process was launched in the different Interreg programmes at the end of 2022, with the exception of the Meuse-Rhine programme, which launched in February 2023.

The first transnational North-West Europe call of the programme has been opened.

4. GOVERNANCE OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

On 27 June 2013, Wallonia adopted a **decree on the Walloon sustainable development strategy**. Each Walloon sustainable development strategy, in particular its action plan, has a life span in tandem with the legislature and must be monitored every two years. However, it includes a long-term vision and short- and medium-term objectives.

Under this decree, on 22 September 2022 Wallonia adopted the *third Walloon sustainable development strategy*².

This strategy involves all Government Ministers to accelerate the implementation of the global sustainable development programme by 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Wallonia. It aims to increase the coherence of sustainable development policies and set a clear course for 2030. It is also part of a systemic multi-scale and multi-stakeholder approach to convey the commitment to the SDGs at the various levels of action in the Region, in its different territories.

To mobilise Walloon stakeholders as a whole, the strategy's action plan has been drawn up and will be implemented in collaboration with the Walloon Partnership for Sustainable Development³, a multi-stakeholder dialogue body with 25 members, created in 2021.

In brief, the content of the strategy is as follows:

- a map of the main Walloon plans showing the respective contributions of these plans to the SDGs;
- 89 quantified objectives for Wallonia for 2030, relating to 61 of the 169 targets of the SDGs translated into the Walloon context;
- monitoring indicators to evaluate Wallonia's progress towards the SDGs;
- 16 cross-cutting actions to increase Wallonia's capacity to implement the SDGs.







² <https://developpementdurable.wallonie.be/strategie-wallonne-developpement-durable>

³ <https://developpementdurable.wallonie.be/partenariat-wallon-developpement-durable>



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Here is an overview:

Category	No.	Action
 Anticipate	1	Co-construct a long-term (2050) sustainable development vision for the Region with Walloon stakeholders
	2	Improve Wallonia's resilience to environmental risks
	3	Identify and promote transition professions and professions of the future
 Establish coherency	4	Map the Walloon strategies and actions around the SDGs, link them and promote a comprehensive approach to sustainable development.
	5	Promote and facilitate the integration of the SDGs into regional administration and management contracts and into local cross-cutting strategic programmes
	6	Improve the coherence of Walloon sustainable development policies through exchanges with local authorities, federated entities, the federal level and the supranational level
 Take part	7	Promote citizen involvement mechanisms
 Train and raise awareness	8	Propose training modules in the Agenda 2030 (SDG Academy) for different audiences
	9	Provide training and awareness for young people and youth and education stakeholders in sustainable development and develop and use research into education for sustainable development
	10	Continue the "towards sustainable organisations" support mechanism
	11	Create a federative regional website based around the SDGs
 Finance	12	Support and provide visibility for local and regional initiatives that contribute to the SDGs as a whole
	13	Establish sustainable development criteria in regional investment aids
	14	Reflect on an analysis of regional budgets with regard to the SDGs
 Measure	15	Repeat the issuing of sustainable bonds to finance public debt and monitor European sustainable finance initiatives
	16	Perform regular assessments of Wallonia's progress to the SDGs (targets and indicators) and take part in Belgium's next voluntary national test

ANNEXE AU PROGRAMME NATIONAL DE REFORME 2023 : LA COMMUNAUTE GERMANOPHONE

1. Cadre global : le Concept de développement régional « Ostbelgien leben 2025 »



Depuis 2009, le concept de développement régional « Ostbelgien leben 2025 » (OL2025) constitue la base durable et à long terme des principaux projets de réforme de la Communauté germanophone.¹ Dans un cadre global cohérent, le concept de développement régional est articulé en périodes d'implémentation de cinq ans s'étendant aux législatures respectives.

En 2023, les projets de la phase d'implémentation 2019-2024 sont poursuivis et un monitoring systématique en est établi.² Suite aux crises multiples depuis 2020, une annexe comprenant sept axes d'action (« Sieben Handlungskorridore ») est ajoutée au concept OL2025.³

En vue de la finalisation du processus à long terme OL2025, un large processus de préparation d'une stratégie « Ostbelgien leben 2040 » (OL 2040) est réalisé. Celui-ci comprend des axes analytiques, conceptionnels et

participatifs interdépendants. Le processus tient compte, en particulier, des nouvelles compétences exercées par la Communauté germanophone en matière d'aménagement du territoire, de logement et d'énergie.⁴

1

https://ostbelgienlive.be/PortalData/2/Resources/downloads/rek/Regionales_Entwicklungskonzept_Band_5_R_EK_III.pdf

2 https://ostbelgienlive.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-258/624_read-53258/

3 https://ostbelgienlive.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-258/624_read-61675/

4 https://ostbelgienlive.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-7126/11715_read-67669/

2. Gestion de crise

2.1. Crise d'Ukraine

Dès le début de la guerre d'agression en Ukraine, la Communauté germanophone (DG) a répondu aux défis qui se dessinaient à travers un plan d'action de 25 mesures dans l'ensemble des compétences pertinentes. Depuis lors, la DG a mobilisé plus de 3,6 millions d'euros pour accueillir et accompagner les réfugiés ukrainiens.

3. Energie/climat



Le gouvernement poursuit les objectifs du plan intégré énergie-climat, à savoir réduire les émissions CO₂ dans la DG de 55% d'ici 2030 et de 100% d'ici 2050.⁵

Une réforme des primes énergétiques, entre autres, a déjà été mise en œuvre. Ainsi, les investissements de la DG dans les primes énergétiques pour les ménages privés ont été multipliés par sept en deux ans. Parallèlement, les aides en faveur de l'efficacité ont été simplifiées pour les ménages à faibles revenus. Les mesures d'efficacité énergétique prises par les associations et les communes dans le cadre du plan d'infrastructure de la DG sont désormais subventionnées à hauteur de 80 %, contre 60 % auparavant.

De plus, plus de 30 millions d'euros ont été prévus pour rénover énergétiquement tous les logements publics.

En ce qui concerne ses propres infrastructures, Ostbelgien veut devenir une région modèle. Pour le deuxième grand programme de construction d'écoles, nous avons par exemple décidé d'atteindre la neutralité climatique à 100%.

La DG veut résolument s'éloigner des méthodes de production d'énergie fossile. En lieu et place, il s'agit d'utiliser davantage de méthodes respectueuses de l'environnement comme

⁵ https://ostbelgienlive.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-7133/11724_read-61877/

la production d'énergie solaire. Il s'agit notamment de miser davantage sur la production d'énergie photovoltaïque et d'établir à cet effet un cadastre à l'échelle de la DG.

Par ailleurs, un nouveau programme de soutien aux communes a déjà permis de lancer 20 projets énergétiques innovants au niveau local, financés à 90% par le gouvernement.

Dans ce contexte, la promotion de la mobilité durable revêt également une importance particulière. En collaboration avec la Région wallonne, les communes et les opérateurs privés, l'ensemble de la CG doit être équipé de bornes de recharge électrique sur l'ensemble du territoire. Dans ce domaine également, l'Est de la Belgique veut devenir une région modèle en Europe. En juin 2022, le gouvernement avait déjà fait réaliser une étude sur la mise en place d'un réseau de bornes de recharge électrique couvrant l'ensemble de la DG. En collaboration avec les communes et d'autres acteurs, 55 emplacements possibles pour des bornes de recharge ont alors été identifiés dans tout l'Est de la Belgique.

En outre, un concept d'administration sans plastique, une gestion de la mobilité en entreprise et un concept d'espaces publics de coworking ont été élaborés au sein du service public.

Au total, le gouvernement prévoit de consacrer 181,5 millions d'euros à la réalisation de projets dans le domaine de l'énergie et du climat.

4. Inflation et finances

La crise actuelle des prix constitue une menace très sérieuse pour la qualité de vie et la cohésion sociale dans la DG.

Les centres d'hébergement et de soins pour personnes âgées de la DG, par exemple, ou encore les nombreuses institutions du secteur socioculturel craignent pour leur existence, car ils ne peuvent tout simplement pas se permettre de payer les coûts salariaux et énergétiques en hausse.

Le secteur non commercial s'est donc vu accorder dès le printemps 2022 une augmentation forfaitaire récurrente de 2% de ses subventions. Cette mesure entraîne à elle seule un surcoût annuel de 3 millions d'euros.

Depuis, les prix ont continué à augmenter. De nouveaux sauts d'index se sont ajoutés depuis lors. La situation s'est encore nettement détériorée.

Le gouvernement a donc décidé d'augmenter une nouvelle fois ses subventions au secteur non marchand de manière récurrente de 3% supplémentaires. Les subventions accordées aux établissements du secteur non marchand ont donc été augmentées en moyenne de 6,25% au total.

A partir de l'année prochaine, le gouvernement a également l'intention de mettre à disposition les moyens nécessaires pour satisfaire au moins 80% des barèmes du secteur socioculturel.

En outre, il a été décidé d'indexer toutes les subventions ACTIF et ACTIF-Plus, tant pour les organisations privées que pour les communes.

Les centres d'hébergement et de soins pour personnes âgées (WPZS) et les aides à domicile dans la DG constituent des exceptions.

Ici, le gouvernement augmente les subventions de 6% supplémentaires de manière récurrente, après que ces subventions aient également déjà été augmentées de 2% au printemps 2022.

Les augmentations supplémentaires pour le secteur non marchand coûtent environ 9,5 millions d'euros par an au budget communautaire. Sur 10 ans, le gouvernement augmente donc ses investissements dans ce secteur si important, qui emploie plus de 1000 personnes, de près de 100 millions d'euros. Une grande partie de cette somme sera consacrée aux centres pour personnes âgées et à l'aide à domicile.

En outre, le gouvernement prévoit trois autres mesures d'envergure pour soulager les centres d'hébergement et de soins et lutter contre la pénurie de personnel qualifié existante.

Premièrement, le gouvernement a décidé d'augmenter les salaires des fonctions d'infirmier (Bachelier et Brevet EBS), de paramédical et d'autres professions de la santé et du social qui travaillent dans les centres d'hébergement et de soins pour personnes âgées, les maisons de soins psychiatriques et l'association de soins palliatifs. Dès le 1er septembre 2020, l'augmentation de certaines grilles salariales dans le secteur des soins aux personnes âgées a été anticipée et appliquée de manière conséquente. Le salaire des aides-soignants a été augmenté jusqu'à 19%. Depuis lors, nous offrons de loin les salaires les plus élevés de Belgique. Il y a deux ans, nous avons également augmenté les salaires des infirmiers et des paramédicaux de 2 à 4% en moyenne.

Deuxièmement, le gouvernement a décidé d'introduire des accompagnateurs de vie quotidienne dans les résidences de soins à partir de novembre 2022. Les accompagnateurs de vie quotidienne soulageront le personnel soignant régulier et les personnes âgées en effectuant certaines activités qui ne relèvent pas des activités de soins protégées.

Troisièmement, le gouvernement prévoit de créer de nouvelles normes en matière de personnel dans les centres d'hébergement et de soins pour seniors.

5. Administration publique

Suite aux crises, l'une des tâches de l'élaboration responsable des politiques consiste à remettre en question ses propres processus et structures et à les développer dans un souci d'efficacité.

Il est vrai que le rapport entre l'emploi public et l'emploi privé dans la DG n'a guère évolué au cours des 15 dernières années, bien que les compétences locales se soient considérablement accrues durant la même période. Malgré le doublement de ses compétences, le secteur public de la DG n'emploie pas plus de personnes qu'il y a 15 ans par rapport au secteur privé. Un audit administratif indépendant, commandé en mars 2021, démontre également que notre administration n'est pas trop grande au vu de la diversité des compétences. Au contraire.

Néanmoins, le gouvernement a l'intention de passer au crible de la critique tous les organigrammes, tableaux des effectifs et modes de fonctionnement du service public.

En raison des sauts d'index liés à l'inflation, les coûts du personnel de l'administration publique vont considérablement augmenter dans les mois à venir. Il convient d'y remédier. Par conséquent, le gouvernement utilisera l'audit administratif de 210 pages et mettra en œuvre de manière conséquente les mesures qui en découlent.

Par exemple, la structure de direction de la fonction publique sera considérablement allégée.

Le gel des nominations au ministère, décrété en juillet 2019, sera prolongé et étendu à toutes les institutions paragouvernementales. Sauf dans les situations statutaires obligatoires, il n'y aura plus de titularisation dans la DG pour le moment.

En outre, le gel des recrutements au ministère sera rétabli et étendu de manière très conséquente. Le gouvernement ne renonce pas seulement à l'embauche de personnel supplémentaire au ministère. Sauf dans des cas exceptionnels et justifiés, il renonce également à remplacer le personnel partant à la retraite par de nouvelles embauches. Désormais, il ne pourra être dérogé à cette décision de principe que dans des cas exceptionnels et justifiés. Cela entraînera une réduction des effectifs dans la fonction publique.

6. Emploi

L'insertion professionnelle

La Communauté germanophone prépare un décret sur le placement/insertion, qui définira les normes pour tous les travaux d'orientation et de placement professionnels. Il traitera également de l'accès aux mesures.

Plusieurs acteurs font actuellement du placement, de l'insertion professionnels des demandeurs d'emploi, des personnes en situation d'handicap, des clients CPAS avec revenu d'intégration.

Peu importe le statut actuel et les difficultés à collaborer, il est du ressort du législateur régional de fixer les normes applicables à toutes personnes à intégrer sur le marché de l'emploi.

Le projet de décret, qui sera probablement voté au Parlement en juin 2023 crée un cadre pour une insertion professionnelle cohérente et efficace dans la Communauté germanophone. L'accompagnement et le placement efficaces des demandeurs d'emploi contribuent à augmenter le taux d'emploi, à promouvoir la participation socioprofessionnelle des citoyens et à lutter contre la pénurie de main-d'œuvre qualifiée.

Pour ces objectifs, il importe peu que les demandeurs d'emploi aient obtenu ou non le droit aux allocations de chômage. Plus encore, il serait irresponsable de pénaliser, voire d'exclure les demandeurs d'emploi sans revenu de remplacement ou disposant d'autres revenus de remplacement des activités publiques d'accompagnement et de placement. Cet projet de décret est porté par l'idée que les personnes doivent être soutenues dans leur parcours vers l'emploi en fonction de leurs besoins, indépendamment de leurs revenus de remplacement.

En revanche, la qualité des offres d'accompagnement et de placement est importante pour ces objectifs. Là encore, le décret fixe un cadre. Il encourage le développement qualitatif du travail d'accompagnement et de placement, par exemple par la structuration de processus fondamentaux ou la systématisation de l'interaction entre l'évaluation et le développement. En outre, le décret encourage l'accompagnement continu et donc durable par un conseiller dit de référence dans un service.

Les outils d'une insertion réussie

- La formation en alternance – *une tradition gagnante en Communauté germanophone*
- Les études en alternance – *un modèle à diversifier davantage*
- Les qualifications partielles – *des modèles sur-mesure en partenariat privé*
- Les formations en entreprises – *une mesure individualisée*
- AktiF AktiF+ - *des aides ciblées*
- Un cadre normatif pour tous – *un placement qualitatif*

7. Education

En vue de transmettre les compétences nécessaires aux futurs professionnels, il est nécessaire de proposer des offres de qualité, tant dans l'enseignement scolaire et professionnel que dans l'enseignement supérieur. Parallèlement, le recrutement de personnel qualifié est de plus en plus difficile, y compris pour les établissements d'enseignement eux-mêmes.

7.1. Formation dans le domaine des soins

Des mesures concrètes sont nécessaires, en particulier dans le secteur des soins, pour remédier à la grave pénurie de personnel qualifié.

Au niveau fédéral, on discute de la création d'un nouveau profil professionnel qui remplacerait l'infirmier breveté, de sorte que tous les infirmiers de santé publique devraient à l'avenir suivre le cursus de bachelier.

Afin d'anticiper de manière proactive ces évolutions, le gouvernement propose de prendre cinq mesures concrètes dans le cadre de nos propres compétences :

1. L'élaboration d'une formation passerelle entre le brevet et le bachelier en sciences infirmières et de santé publique ;
2. L'élaboration d'une autre formation passerelle entre l'aide-soignant et le brevet en sciences infirmières et de santé publique ;
3. En fonction des développements au niveau fédéral, une réforme de la formation au brevet ;
4. La création de cours d'allemand supplémentaires pour le personnel soignant de langue étrangère ;
5. Une campagne d'image pour augmenter l'attractivité des professions infirmières.

7.2. Bachelier en travail social

Parallèlement, le 16 mai 2019, le gouvernement a déjà pris une décision de principe concernant l'élaboration du contenu d'un bachelier en "travail social" axé sur la pratique. En septembre 2024, le gouvernement souhaite lancer une première année d'études.

7.3. Création d'un système de bourses

Une étape importante sera la mise en place d'un système de bourses innovant, que nous concevons sur le modèle du Tyrol du Sud et de certains Länder autrichiens.

Le gouvernement souhaite accorder à moyen terme une bourse très attractive à toutes les personnes qui se forment à un métier dit "en pénurie", bourse qu'elles n'auront pas à rembourser si, à l'issue de leurs études, elles sont disponibles sur notre marché du travail régional pendant une durée minimale fixée à cinq ans.

En 2023, le gouvernement versera plus de 2 millions d'euros dans un fonds de bourses d'études spécialement créé à cet effet.

7.4. Multilinguisme

Outre les compétences professionnelles spécifiques, le multilinguisme fait partie des principales exigences professionnelles dans les Cantons de l'Est. La promotion du plurilinguisme dès l'école maternelle fait sans aucun doute partie des points forts de la DG. Afin d'améliorer encore la promotion du plurilinguisme, le gouvernement propose des mesures supplémentaires à tous les niveaux.

L'enquête complète DELF et les certifications linguistiques pour le français qui en découlent doivent être poursuivies. De plus, des certifications linguistiques pour l'anglais et le néerlandais doivent être introduites.

Afin de promouvoir les compétences linguistiques de nos enfants et de nos jeunes, le gouvernement souhaite, d'une part, continuer à améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement des langues étrangères et, d'autre part, développer la qualité et la quantité de Cours d'immersion en français, première langue étrangère.

Le décret relatif à la promotion des compétences en langues étrangères a créé en juin 2022 de nouvelles bases qui doivent maintenant être exploitées.

Les enseignants des écoles maternelles et secondaires qui dispensent exclusivement des activités ou des matières dans la première langue étrangère devront à l'avenir faire preuve d'une connaissance suffisante de la langue d'enseignement (B1) au lieu d'une connaissance approfondie de la langue d'enseignement (B2). Parallèlement, le recours à des "native speakers" à l'école maternelle est renforcé par l'introduction d'un poste correspondant.

Dans les écoles primaires, le choix des matières qui peuvent être enseignées dans la première langue étrangère a été élargi, permettant ainsi aux projets pilotes bilingues lancés à l'école maternelle de se poursuivre à l'école primaire. Les écoles primaires ont également obtenu la possibilité de proposer des activités et des cours supplémentaires aux élèves qui, à leur entrée à l'école primaire, ont déjà de bonnes compétences dans la première langue étrangère. Cette offre convient entre autres au soutien des élèves bilingues et des élèves qui ont fréquenté une école maternelle dans une autre langue d'enseignement.

L'enseignement bilingue de matières dans les écoles secondaires doit également être amélioré. Les offres correspondantes doivent être introduites ou développées en particulier dans les sections technico-professionnelles.

7.5. Mise en œuvre de compétences interdisciplinaires

Un autre élément important concerne la transmission de compétences interdisciplinaires telles que les compétences en matière d'information et de médias, les compétences en matière de choix professionnel ou les compétences en matière d'éducation civique et au développement durable.

Dans ce contexte, deux mesures méritent d'être soulignées :

1. les compétences transdisciplinaires doivent désormais être intégrées dans les référentiels de compétences des différentes disciplines scolaires et donc être rendues obligatoires pour tous les enseignants.
- 2) Afin de garantir l'enseignement transdisciplinaire de ces compétences dans le quotidien scolaire, les écoles secondaires recevront du personnel supplémentaire à partir de cette année scolaire.

7.6. Qualification partielle

La formation en alternance est bien entendu un autre élément important dans la formation de personnel qualifié. Le ZAWM et l'IAWM ont développé en coopération avec le ministère de nouvelles formations orientées vers l'emploi.

Il s'agit de qualifications partielles, c'est-à-dire de qualifications ayant une capacité de connexion et de prise en compte dans la formation en alternance, qui doivent contribuer à l'insertion sur le marché du travail.

Elles s'adressent aux personnes qui, pour diverses raisons, ne peuvent pas suivre la voie de l'apprentissage classique. Le gouvernement veut créer une plus grande perméabilité entre les systèmes afin que les personnes qui ne disposent pas de qualifications formelles aient la possibilité d'obtenir une attestation de participation afin d'augmenter leurs chances sur le marché du travail ou de travailler à l'obtention d'un diplôme professionnel reconnu par l'État.

7.7. Réforme structurelle

Pour l'enseignement secondaire technique et professionnel et la formation de niveau moyen, le gouvernement maintient en outre la réforme structurelle prévue.

La réforme structurelle doit ouvrir des synergies et des perspectives entièrement nouvelles,

7.8. Pédagogie de soutien

Pour le domaine de la pédagogie de soutien, le gouvernement prévoit également une réforme fondamentale. Afin de pouvoir répondre aux besoins complexes de tous les enfants et adolescents, il est nécessaire de regrouper toutes les forces disponibles en matière de pédagogie de soutien. C'est pourquoi le gouvernement a décidé l'année dernière de créer une institution indépendante, pluraliste et paragouvernementale pour la pédagogie de soutien, au sein de laquelle le Centre de pédagogie de soutien et l'école de soutien Pater-Damian pourront regrouper toutes leurs ressources.

7.9. Accueil extrascolaire, école des devoirs et école

Une autre réforme fondamentale que le gouvernement souhaite réaliser au cours de cette session concerne la pratique des devoirs dans les écoles de l'Est de la Belgique.

Le gouvernement veut créer des services gratuits d'aide aux devoirs à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur des écoles.

7.10.Éducation culturelle

L'éducation culturelle fait partie intégrante du paysage éducatif extrascolaire. Elle donne accès à l'art et à la culture, ainsi qu'à une réflexion sur le patrimoine culturel, l'identité culturelle et la diversité culturelle.

Le décret sur l'éducation culturelle extrascolaire traite de l'éducation culturelle non formelle dans un contexte extrascolaire.

Au cours de la session actuelle, le gouvernement proposera une réforme du cadre réglementaire des ateliers créatifs et de meilleures bases pour les ateliers créatifs de vacances. Le gouvernement prévoit de refinancer ce secteur d'environ 40%.

7.11. Renforcement de la profession d'enseignant

Si l'on parvient dans la plupart des cas à recruter du personnel qualifié au début de l'année scolaire, la pénurie d'enseignants s'aggrave en cours d'année en raison des absences de personnel qui nécessitent un remplacement.

Pour lutter contre la pénurie d'enseignants, il reste nécessaire, malgré toutes les améliorations déjà décidées, d'augmenter encore l'attractivité du métier d'enseignant. Ainsi, un mentorat pour les enseignants en début de carrière sera introduit au cours de l'année scolaire 2022-2023. De même, la réforme du système d'évaluation et de notation dans l'enseignement sera abordée.

Pour renforcer, soutenir et conseiller les membres du personnel occupant des postes de direction pédagogique, le gouvernement a également lancé un programme de coaching en février 2022.

7.12. Qualification des enseignants du primaire

Par ailleurs, le gouvernement s'efforce de réformer la formation des enseignants du primaire afin d'améliorer encore la formation des futurs enseignants du primaire et de les préparer ainsi mieux à leur métier.

La nouvelle formation devrait débiter au cours de l'année académique 2025-2026.

Parallèlement, la Haute école autonome a développé, à la demande du gouvernement, une offre d'études permettant aux personnes titulaires d'un bachelier ou d'un master de suivre une formation transversale de trois semestres pour devenir enseignant du primaire. Les diplômés de ce cursus devraient également bénéficier, à partir de la prochaine année scolaire, du nouveau système de bourses à créer pour permettre aux personnes actives de s'offrir cette formation.

7.13. Pool de remplacement

Par ailleurs, le gouvernement créera en septembre 2023 un pool de remplacement pour l'enseignement primaire, auquel il sera possible de recourir à l'intérieur de l'institution. Du personnel supplémentaire sera recruté pour remplacer rapidement les enseignants malades et éviter l'interruption des cours, dans le but de décharger tous les enseignants qui devaient jusqu'à présent remplacer leurs collègues en cas de maladie.

7.14. Amélioration de la clé de répartition du personnel dans les écoles maternelles

Parallèlement, le gouvernement souhaite améliorer sensiblement le calcul du capital de postes pour les écoles maternelles. Le nombre de postes dans la fonction d'instituteurs auquel une école a droit sur la base du nombre d'élèves doit à l'avenir être arrondi à l'unité supérieure, c'est-à-dire que tous les quarts, demi-quarts et trois quarts de postes dans la fonction d'instituteur doivent être complétés par des postes complets.

Afin de donner aux pouvoirs organisateurs une plus grande flexibilité et de leur permettre de mieux s'adapter aux différentes réalités des établissements dont ils ont la charge, le gouvernement compte permettre dorénavant d'organiser 50 % du capital horaire dans la fonction d'assistant à l'école maternelle dans un autre poste (par ex. éducateur ou instituteur).

7.15. Vision globale

Dans le cadre du développement d'une vision globale de l'éducation, une équipe interdisciplinaire d'analystes de l'OCDE a publié en mars 2022, à la demande du gouvernement, le rapport de résultats de l'analyse sur la qualité et l'équité du système scolaire dans la CG - avec des conclusions très intéressantes pour la politique éducative.

Deux phases de projet vont maintenant suivre :

1. la formulation de la vision proprement dite pour le système éducatif
2. l'élaboration du plan directeur.

7.16. Programme de construction d'écoles II

Une offre éducative de qualité implique notamment une infrastructure éducative de qualité. En collaboration avec les parties prenantes au projet et des experts externes, un important travail de préparation a été réalisé malgré Corona pour un deuxième grand programme de construction d'écoles, afin de rénover et de moderniser, parfois même d'agrandir, les écoles qui ont encore besoin d'être rénovées sur le territoire de la CG.

Début mai 2022, le gouvernement a pu approuver un cahier des charges pour la gestion des projets de construction du programme de construction scolaire. Le programme de construction scolaire II respectera bien entendu les principes de la construction durable et énergétiquement efficace. Ceux-ci comprennent entre autres l'utilisation de matériaux de construction naturels et la neutralité carbone à 100% dans l'exploitation. Nos bâtiments scolaires doivent devenir climatiquement neutres.

7.17. Augmentation des subventions de fonctionnement

Afin d'assurer le fonctionnement de nos écoles en temps de crise, d'absorber les surcoûts liés à l'inflation et de maintenir ainsi des offres avantageuses pour les élèves, le gouvernement va augmenter les subventions de fonctionnement dans tous les réseaux d'écoles. Cette année encore, nous allons augmenter les subventions de 7,8% et l'année prochaine de 3,4% supplémentaires.

8. Accueil de l'enfance

Chaque enfant ayant besoin d'une place d'accueil ne doit pas seulement avoir droit à une place d'accueil, mais aussi se voir effectivement proposer une place d'accueil. Le Centre régional pour l'accueil des jeunes enfants (RZKB) joue un rôle clé à cet égard.

De nombreuses mesures ont déjà été prises par le passé pour assurer la situation financière du Centre de la petite enfance. Ces dernières années, le gouvernement a augmenté substantiellement sa dotation au RZKB, qui est passée de 990.000 euros en 2010 à 5,2 millions d'euros en 2021.

La réforme nécessaire du RZKB progresse et se dessine. Le gouvernement souhaite transformer le RZKB en une institution paragouvernementale et regrouper des services importants. Le 20 avril 2022, le gouvernement et le RZKB ont signé une déclaration d'intention en ce sens. Le 25 août 2022, le gouvernement a adopté en première lecture l'avant-projet de décret portant création d'un centre de la Communauté germanophone pour l'accueil des enfants.

La conception de la réforme se fait désormais en collaboration avec tous les acteurs concernés et, bien entendu, avec les partenaires sociaux.

Les éléments centraux de cette réforme sont l'amélioration des conditions générales pour l'ensemble du personnel et notamment l'introduction d'un statut complet pour les gardiennes d'enfants. Cela fait maintenant 20 ans que les gardiennes d'enfants travaillent sous un statut partiel. Le statut complet est un souhait de longue date de nombreuses gardiennes d'enfants. Grâce au statut complet, les assistantes maternelles auront enfin la perspective tant espérée et la sécurité financière qui leur manquait jusqu'à présent. Le gouvernement souhaite également réformer les contributions des parents dans le domaine de la petite enfance. En dessous du revenu médian, la garde des enfants sera à l'avenir gratuite. Au-dessus du revenu médian, le gouvernement veut procéder à un nouvel échelonnement selon les catégories de revenus ; avec une participation nettement plus élevée des ménages qui disposent de revenus très élevés.

9. Digitalisation

Le gouvernement élabore actuellement son propre concept numérique pour la Communauté germanophone. Il est essentiel d'impliquer tous les citoyens dans ce processus. Le gouvernement veut notamment encourager les seniors à participer à la vie sociale par le biais de solutions numériques.

La construction d'un réseau de fibre optique couvrant l'ensemble de la communauté fait partie de la stratégie. Le gouvernement a prévu 40 millions d'euros à cet effet dans le budget communautaire.

Le 29 septembre 2022, une nouvelle société d'infrastructure numérique fut créée entre la DG, Proximus et Ethias. Après les procédures d'autorisation nécessaires, l'extension concrète du réseau de fibre optique sur l'ensemble du territoire de la DG devrait commencer au courant de l'année 2023.

Dans l'optique de la numérisation dans l'enseignement, un prestataire de services externe a déjà été chargé en 2018 de réaliser une analyse des besoins.

Sur cette base, la réforme informatique de l'enseignement que l'on souhaite maintenant mettre en œuvre comprend des mesures importantes telles que

- L'introduction de connexions en fibre optique dans les écoles secondaires,
- L'optimisation de la mise en réseau interne dans les écoles,
- L'équipement des enseignants, des élèves du secondaire et des apprentis en ordinateurs portables,
- L'octroi de subventions pour l'équipement des écoles en matériel informatique,
- La mise en œuvre du programme de gestion scolaire Skolengo,
- La mise en place de responsables informatiques et d'un support informatique
- Etc.

10. Aménagement du territoire

Pour l'aménagement du territoire, un modèle ambitieux en trois phases a été présenté au Parlement, avec pour objectif d'adapter au plus près les réglementations existantes, de simplifier les procédures et de tirer les leçons des crises passées.

La première phase concernait des mesures à court terme visant à garantir une adoption et une gestion sans heurts de l'aménagement du territoire. La deuxième phase concernait la première adaptation substantielle du code du développement territorial. La troisième phase consistera ensuite à élaborer une stratégie territoriale spécifique à la DG, qui servira de base à la réforme globale de la législation sur l'aménagement du territoire. Les travaux ont déjà commencé.

11. Logement

En ce qui concerne le logement, la fusion des deux anciennes sociétés de gestion immobilière et de construction, souhaitée à l'époque, s'est déjà concrétisée en juin 2021.

En tant que point de contact central, l'ÖWOB couvre depuis lors l'ensemble du territoire de la DG. Dans l'optique de la durabilité du parc immobilier, le gouvernement a maintenant conclu un accord avec l'ÖWOB pour la rénovation énergétique et la construction de nouveaux logements subventionnés par les pouvoirs publics. Nous voulons consacrer 30 millions d'euros à la réalisation de ce projet et d'autres d'ici 2026.

En outre, le gouvernement élabore une nouvelle législation en matière de logement. Sur la base des recommandations du GT Logement et du dialogue citoyen, une note d'orientation est en cours d'élaboration afin de présenter l'orientation future de la politique du logement.

12. Santé

Dans le domaine de la santé, le but est d'une part de poursuivre résolument les efforts visant à consolider les deux sites hospitaliers.

Depuis le 1er janvier 2020, les deux hôpitaux des Cantons de l'Est font partie du réseau hospitalier "Move" avec le CHC. Les deux hôpitaux disposent désormais de nouvelles directions, qui sont tenues de collaborer au moins 25% de leur temps.

Une collaboration plus étroite entre les deux hôpitaux est indispensable pour garantir le maintien des deux sites et donc des soins de santé de qualité à long terme.

Parmi les défis à relever dans le secteur hospitalier figurent la valorisation des formes de soins ambulatoires, la numérisation et le développement de l'offre en matière de gestion de crise aiguë en cas de problèmes psychiatriques.

Enfin, les hôpitaux restent des partenaires importants dans la mise en œuvre du plan eHealth et d'autres plans stratégiques fédéraux.

Un autre défi dans le secteur de la santé est de continuer à promouvoir la coopération entre la prévention et la première ligne afin de faciliter la transition entre prévention et soutien pour les patients et d'éviter les maladies chroniques et les traitements à long terme des patients.

Dans ce contexte, ce que l'on appelle les "soins intégrés" représentent une nouvelle forme de soins. Le gouvernement y voit des opportunités durables pour garantir durablement la qualité et l'efficacité économique du système de santé.

Le Service pour une vie autonome a donc été chargé d'explorer les concepts correspondants. La construction des soins intégrés en Communauté germanophone a lieu actuellement.

Pour le domaine de la santé mentale, l'objectif du gouvernement est de déposer un projet de décret "Santé mentale" au cours du deuxième semestre 2023, qui encadrera le domaine de la santé mentale, actualisera les bases juridiques transférées, comblera les lacunes du réseau de soins et créera de nouvelles offres adaptées.

13. Personnes aux besoins de soutien

Afin de soutenir davantage les personnes ayant des besoins de soutien particuliers, le gouvernement prévoit de mettre en place un conseil consultatif spécifique.

14. Economie sociale

Les entreprises sociales poursuivent souvent des objectifs environnementaux et sociaux importants, associés à la génération de revenus propres. Elles créent des formations et des emplois et contribuent à une société juste et inclusive.

Afin de mieux soutenir le secteur, le gouvernement souhaite leur donner un cadre juridique propre. Le projet de décret relatif à l'économie sociale sera présenté par le gouvernement au cours du premier semestre 2023.

15. Pouvoirs locaux

Trois mesures doivent contribuer à soulager les finances communales face aux crises qui s'annoncent :

1. Le gouvernement augmentera de manière récurrente la dotation communale d'environ 5 millions d'euros à partir de 2023. Cela correspond à une augmentation de plus de 20%.
2. Le gouvernement a décidé d'augmenter l'année prochaine la dotation annuelle de voirie en faveur des communes de 33% par récurrence, de 2,25 millions d'euros aujourd'hui à 3 millions d'euros à partir de 2023.
3. Face aux énormes distorsions sur les marchés, le gouvernement a décidé de subventionner les surcoûts liés à l'inflation (révisions de prix) pour les travaux d'infrastructure des communes.

Annex: The French-speaking Community's reform programme

Introduction

The strategic orientations of the Government of the French-speaking Community for the period 2019-2024 are detailed in the Community Policy Declaration (CPD). The priority for this period remains the Pact for Educational Excellence.

The Pact for Educational Excellence is a set of reforms relating to all aspects of compulsory education: the content of curricula, course organisation, teacher training, etc. Its main objective is to improve the quality of the French-speaking Community's education system. Since 2017, this has resulted in a 'systemic change' approach to several aspects of education, and a determination on the part of all those involved to gradually improve the school system.

Regarding non-compulsory education, the Directorate General for Higher Education, Lifelong Education and Scientific Research is introducing measures relating to digital strategy in higher education and adult education. The Administration is also seeking to support students in higher education through better allocation of study grants and support with their higher education programme choices.

Response to country-specific recommendations

CSR 3 Subpart 1: *'addressing labour shortages and skills mismatches, in particular by improving the performance and inclusiveness of the education system, including enhancing the quality and relevance to the labour market of education and vocational training, as well as of career paths and teacher training.'*

Compulsory education

- **Making vocational education an area of excellence (Focus 3 of the Pact – Promoting vocational education)**

Vocational education offers options based on learning the specifics of a particular occupation. The Pact for Educational Excellence aims to improve the programme for students who enter vocational education and to strengthen its governance, in order to promote a range of options that are more closely connected to the working world. Since the start of the 2022 academic year, the first step has been taken with the gradual adoption of the new vocational education programme (PEQ).

The PEQ organises the training and certification of students over three years of secondary education, from the 4th to the 6th grade. Learning has become modular: the training process is organised into

learning units which are progressively validated. This system already existed for certain options and will now become the norm for vocational education. The programme allows students to confirm their study choice in the 4th grade and, if they have experienced great difficulties, to do an extra year. Between the 5th and 6th grades, the evaluation processes are organised differently: the student has two years to acquire the requisite knowledge and competencies, for both the general programme and the subjects relating to their occupational option. As a result, at the end of the 5th grade, students continue their programme into the 6th grade, and grade repetition is very unusual. At the end of the 6th (or 7th) grade, to avoid failing students dropping out, the end of their programme is specially organised to support them in obtaining their qualification as soon as possible. This final part of the programme must include an internship, which both demonstrates commitment and serves as a transition to the working world.

Vocational education is an essential component of education. The combination of general and vocational courses that it involves is a major advantage for students and of great importance for society. In 2017, as part of the work relating to the Pact, the education community asked the government to rethink the relationship between vocational education and vocational training, which is the responsibility of the Regions. Developing synergies, pooling resources and rationalising are all important to promoting vocational education and vocational training, but also to developing work-study programmes.

The reform of the way in which the range of options is organised in vocational education has been submitted for a formal opinion from the Council of State, and will then be submitted to the government for its final approval; after this, it will be voted on in Parliament before the summer of 2023. The new system will be implemented for the first time in 2024. The reform aims to regulate the range of options offered by vocational secondary schools in order to bring them more closely into line with skills in demand (and to anticipate new needs for certain skills), and to optimise schools' provision of skills by avoiding the organisation of very small departments which is wasteful of budget resources. The new decision-making process has three main objectives:

- (1) to integrate information on the demand for skills in the labour market into the decision-making process;
- (2) to check schools' proposals on the opening of new departments more closely;
- (3) to provide an entirely new process for closing a school department if it meets certain criteria.

The work carried out in 2022 by the representatives of the French-speaking Community, Wallonia, the Brussels-Capital Region and the French Community Commission (COCOF) has also made it possible to perform an inventory with a view to the cross-disciplinary reinforcement of vocational education and vocational training, and in particular work-study education and training programmes. The report is based on the analysis of hundreds of contributions, interviews and focus groups, data analysis, etc. The inventory describes how the vocational education and vocational training systems work and their contributions to the achievement of social objectives; their strengths and weaknesses are analysed and potential actions are identified. For vocational education, the inventory is based on the work carried out in connection with the Pact.

The options organised in vocational education follow developments in different occupations so as to offer relevant training for young people, in line with the changing nature of society and the world of work. Ensuring that every student has the same opportunities to complete internships is also a working focus of the Pact for Educational Excellence.

- **Promoting the teaching profession (Focus 2 of the Pact – Governance, autonomy and accountability)**

Improving the education system requires motivated, trained and qualified educational teams. As well as supporting the skills and well-being of existing staff members, the Pact for Educational Excellence also aims to attract and maintain the potential for prospective teachers in order to tackle the serious shortage that has existed for several years already.

In-service training for teachers is envisaged as a tool for ensuring that teams can continue their professional development and receive support in the face of shifts, the changing nature of the profession and the challenges schools face in the 21st century. Management of this at the level of the education system has been set up by means of the decree that was adopted in June 2021 and came into force in September 2022. The Council for Continuing Vocational Training – which provides a forum for operational consultation in the field of vocational training – has been established. Among other things it has been tasked with defining training needs.

The reform also includes projects aimed at stabilising new teachers, improving the welcome and support they are offered, and combating the labour shortage at the start as well as during the school year. A first set of measures to combat the shortage was put in place in 2020. A second set of measures was adopted at the start of the 2022 academic year:

- for second language teachers (German, English and Dutch) who started work on 28/08/2023, recognising their employment record in the private sector directly in their seniority for remuneration purposes if they can certify by any legal means that they have used the language in question in their previous job or jobs;
- another specific measure to combat the shortage of modern languages teachers involves recognising the passing of a language exam as a valid qualification for teachers;
- a pilot experiment with a ‘local supply teacher pool’ has been introduced in basic mainstream education (Brussels and Hainaut-Sud zones). This pilot experiment aims to further stabilise new teachers while combating the labour shortage during the school year.

The objective is to create a pool of 48 full-time equivalent teachers who can be sent as needed to primary schools to replace absent teachers. The governing bodies will receive additional budgetary resources to hire teachers to join this pool. They will be able to pool these resources beyond the confines of their educational networks.

- **A new personalised support system for all students (Focus 1 of the Pact – Student learning)**

The reform provides for a new core curriculum based on significant measures to support student success: new personalised differentiation and support systems that are part of an evolving approach to managing learning difficulties, with a view to rapidly identifying learning difficulties and implementing, evaluating and adjusting the required responses to them. This evolving approach will be made possible by three key tools:

- the introduction of personalised support and the allocation of periods used to support differentiation practices (partially implemented in the classes of primary grades 1 and 2 since the start of the school year in September 2022);

- the imposition of student monitoring processes during the year, putting into practice the evolving approach to learning difficulties (from 2023-24, from preschool grade 1 to primary grade 4) ;
- and the introduction of tools supporting this approach, in particular the student support file (DAccE) (from 2023-24, for all students from preschool grade 1 to primary grade 4).

The DAccE is a new digital tool for supporting success. It is an individual and unique file for each student, monitoring their progress throughout schooling and designed to help them succeed. The DAccE application is designed in a digital format at the level of the FWB education system, and will give members of the teaching team and staff of the psychological, medical and social support centres access to the individual files of the students in their charge. The DAccE is also accessible to parents, which will promote dialogue between parents, the educational team, and possibly the psychological, medical and social support centre, as students' challenges and needs are monitored as closely as possible.

In 2022, the Decree Introducing the Student Support File was adopted, as was the Government Decree Implementing the Education Code Concerning the Student Support File.

The DAccE will be introduced in September 2023 for students from preschool grade 1 to primary grade 4 in mainstream education and for students in preschool and at maturity level 1 in special education.

- **The 48 operational territorial centres (Focus 4 of the Pact – Developing inclusive schools)**

Since the beginning of the 2022 academic year, each mainstream education school has been cooperating with one of the territorial centres created to support them in introducing reasonable adaptations and integrating students with special needs.

A territorial centre is a structure attached to a special education school. It consists of a multidisciplinary team of at least 15 teachers, support staff, speech therapists and physiotherapists, all of whom specialise in learning disabilities and/or disability support. Their purpose is to help and support children with special needs and their teachers in mainstream education.

In total, 48 centres cover the schools of the 10 education zones in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, from preschool to secondary level. Any child with special needs can now receive the support he or she needs from a team of professionals from the centre with which the school works, without being enrolled in special education.

The purpose of introducing the territorial centres is to gradually increase the inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream education throughout the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. This is one of the objectives for improving the education system that the government has set itself and to which the schools' target agreements must contribute.

This objective is based on two ambitions:

- to improve the care provided to students with special needs who are enrolled in mainstream education, in continued application of the 'reasonable adaptations decree' (the decree of 7 December 2017 on the reception, support and retention of students with special needs in mainstream primary and secondary education);

- to increase the proportion of students in special education who continue their education in mainstream education subject to the introduction of the necessary aid (the total permanent integration scheme as governed by the decree of 3 March 2004 organising special education).
- **Schooling time reform (Focus 5 of the Pact – Quality of life)**

As of the beginning of the 2022 school year, the 900,000 students of the French-speaking Community, from preschool to the end of secondary education, in general, technical, vocational and special education, have started the school year with a new, more regular calendar.

The Pact for Educational Excellence thus rebalances the time spent at school with alternating periods of 7 weeks of classes and 2 weeks of holidays; 14 weeks of holiday are kept, but distributed better throughout the year. The total number of school days (182) thus remains the same.

As well as reducing stress and fatigue throughout the year, shrinking the summer holidays helps to mitigate the school dropout effect currently observed at the beginning of the school year due to the excessively long time away from school.

This represents a major change in societal habits. Schooling time was organised around the interests of adults and had remained unchanged for more than a century. Research clearly shows that better alternation between classes and free time is good for learning. Excessively long summer holidays are disruptive to learning and thus produce educational inequalities. This new structure also presents an opportunity to provide activities outside the school setting that complement learning (such as sports or cultural courses) and contribute to children's freedom.

Non-compulsory education:

- **Rethinking the systems and landscape of vocational education and vocational training**

In the spring of 2022, the Governments of the French-speaking Community, Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region adopted a joint paper that aimed to define and initiate the implementation of a cross-disciplinary roadmap with a view to systematically rethinking the systems and landscape of vocational education and vocational training and in particular the use of work-study programmes. This involves, in particular, strengthening the role of higher education and adult education in policies on the use of work-study programmes. Links between institutions and the business world are essential to promote the employability of young people.

In implementing this focus of the reform, and on the proposal of Minister-President Pierre-Yves Jeholet, Minister of Higher Education Valérie Glatigny and Minister of Education Caroline Désir, the Government of the French-speaking Community decided in November 2022 to take a series of measures that put into concrete effect four previously defined priority objectives:

- Priority objective no. 1: Promoting the following, by means of improved interaction and complementarity between work-study education programmes, training operators, adult education and higher education:
 - Considering making access easier to the upper secondary education certificate (C.E.S.S.) for those with qualifications from IFAPME (the Walloon Institute for Block-Release Training, the Self-Employed and SMEs) and SFPME (the SME Training Service).

- Introducing entry routes into vocational higher education, subject to strictly defined conditions and arrangements.
 - Analysing certification systems within the European Union.
 - Recognising professional certifications and teaching diplomas in different public-sector positions.
- Priority objective no. 2: Simplifying procedures and encouraging the recognition of prior learning between education and training operators in order to safeguard learning continuity:
 - Simplifying the approval by the FWB of diplomas issued by IFAPME and SFPME;
 - Revising the system for equivalence between the apprenticeship certificate issued by IFAPME and SFPME and the qualification certificate (CQ) issued by education institutions for training courses corresponding to an SFMQ (French-Language Occupations and Qualifications Service) profile through, in particular, the recognition of prior learning and certifications between education and training operators based on equivalent learning objectives.
 - Priority objective no. 3: Improving IT tools to match internship supply and demand in collaboration with the various stakeholders:
 - The development by actors from the sectors, operators and OFFA (the French-Language Work-Study Training Office) of an IT tool to match internship supply and demand that will allow accredited businesses to advertise internships for learners, learners to submit applications for these internships and ensure follow-up and support for both businesses (for example if they cannot find learners) and learners (for example if they cannot find internship places).
 - Priority objective no. 4: Promoting and deploying work-study education and training programmes that lead to long-term, high-quality jobs:
 - Abolishing the upper limit for the combination of family allowances with work-study remuneration for all young people who complete compulsory internships as part of their work-study training (work-study master's programmes, work-study education and training, business leader training programmes), with retroactive effect from 1 September 2022.
 - Access to the profession: the recognition by one-stop service centres of the qualification certificate (QC) issued by the education sector.

- **Reforming pre-service teacher training**

At the end of 2021, the French-speaking Community parliament adopted a decree increasing the length of pre-service training for teachers from three to four years. The reform targets both future basic education (pre-school and primary) teachers and lower secondary teachers. However, there is no change for upper secondary teachers who have already obtained a five-year master's degree. This new four-year programme will be organised on a joint basis between university colleges and universities. Students will also have to complete a 'long internship' during their studies. The purpose of this extension of teacher training is to ensure they are better-equipped to practise their profession

and thus contribute to the improvement of the French-language education system. The reform will apply from the 2023-2024 academic year.

- **Reform of the Landscape Decree**

The reform of the 'Landscape decree' was adopted in December 2021 and implemented in 2022. Its purpose is to combat the lengthening of study programmes without any increase in graduation rates, create clearer pathways for French-speaking students and steer them more effectively towards success.

The three main points of reform are:

1. Enabling students to acquire a solid educational foundation from the start of their programme, identify any problems as early as possible and remedy them.

The priority for students will be to gain 60 Bac 1 credits in a maximum of 2 years. The transition from a bachelor's to a master's programme will also be signposted more clearly, to avoid putting off difficulties to later in the academic pathway.

2. Making the eligibility conditions for a grant (the right to re-enrol in an institution) easier to understand.

Students will have 5 years to obtain their bachelor's degree (6 if they change programme). Intermediate progress markers will be introduced. The Government also wanted to introduce an additional mechanism that would enable students who had lost their eligibility for a grant to recover it. Students who are ineligible for funding may be deemed eligible again if they successfully obtain all the credits in their annual programme – which must have a minimum of 45 credits.

3. Increasing the funding to help students achieve success; these funds will be directed at students who encounter difficulties, to help them towards a successful outcome and graduation.

In order to support students in their progress towards success, funding for this purpose has been increased and will be targeted more effectively at students experiencing difficulties, in order to support them towards graduation. The annual budget for this has been increased by 6 million euros and will now amount to more than 90 million euros. Institutions must draw up a strategic student success support plan before the start of each academic year, in which they list the remedial activities they will introduce and the financial resources that will be allocated to them. Particular attention will be paid to students who have difficulty gaining the first 60 credits of their bachelor's programme.

These new rules will apply in full to students enrolling in higher education for the first time in 2022/2023 and to students starting their master's programme. For students who have already enrolled, transitional arrangements will apply which are detailed in a personalised way on an interactive platform.

Following the organisation of briefings for higher education stakeholders (lecturers, administrative officers of establishments, etc.), the reform of the landscape decree is now the subject of a public information campaign aimed primarily at students. Developed in collaboration with the Education

Administration and the Academy of Research and Higher Education (ARES), it consists of two complementary components:

1. An interactive web page that can now be consulted at <https://www.mesetudes.be/decret-paysage/>. This allows students to understand all the changes brought about by the reform of the Landscape Decree, and to find out easily when and how the changes will apply to them.
2. A large-scale digital campaign will also be launched through the traditional channels (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube), but also via Twitch, which is widely used by young people. This will involve visuals and four special videos and will encourage current and future students to consult the interactive web page.

- **Hybrid education in adult education**

The digital transition of the education system is at the heart of the policies conducted by the Government of the French-speaking Community. In December 2022, the Government adopted the draft decree setting the conditions for organising hybrid education in adult education (French Community Government Decree of 21/12/2022).

This introduces measures and systems specific to each level of education in order to reflect structural changes in society. These measures aim, among other things, to focus on digital knowledge and skills in order to support education stakeholders in their use of educational technology and to provide access to the necessary equipment and content and ensure that all learners have equal opportunities for social emancipation by preparing them to be responsible citizens.

In recent years, adult education has promoted the integration of digital technology into teaching practices, whether remotely, face-to-face or in a hybrid approach. The development of these tools and the variety of solutions available have changed the place of digital technologies in the daily experience of learners, teachers and establishments.

The suspension of face-to-face classes, the widespread introduction of remote learning activities and then the use of hybrid educational approaches following the public protection measures of 2020 and 2021 were catalysts for a trend that was already emerging.

This is the context for the adoption of the French-speaking Community Government Decree of 21/12/2022. The decree entered into force on 24 February 2023. From now on, there is a regulatory framework that allows educational units and training activities organised on a hybrid basis to combine face-to-face and distance learning activities by using different educational and digital tools for communication, interaction and collaboration with and between students.

- **A tool to help with higher education programme choices**

A French-speaking Community Government decree was adopted on 15 December 2022, awarding an additional grant of 1.3 million euros to the Academic Centres of Excellence for the creation of a guidance tool.

Shared between centres, the tool will take the form of an online questionnaire which is neither mandatory nor binding, at the end of which the future student will be presented with various study

options. The aim of the tool is to suggest choices that are not necessarily those that students had in mind and to inform them as accurately as possible about the programmes they could take.

The results of these various tests will be accompanied by personalised advice, including a referral to specialists who will help young people to refine their study and career choices.

The new tool should also allow young people to identify more accurately the requirements they have to meet for the envisaged study programmes, and will if necessary direct them towards preparatory classes and other services to help them succeed.

A first version of this new tool will be operational in time for the start of the 2023 academic year. However, it should continue to develop after that time.

- **Improving the allocation of study grants**

In June 2022, the Government of the French-speaking Community launched an extensive information campaign aimed at informing students about the financial support that is available. With a budget of 250,000 euros, the campaign presents all the forms of support available both in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and at other levels of power – federal (CPAS), regional (e.g. transport), and so on – and provides information directly to students and their families. In this context, higher education establishments will be able to give students better information about existing forms of support when they enrol. In addition, a communication campaign specifically on study grants for the year 2022/2023 has been organised. These campaigns contribute to the inclusiveness of education in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

Social cohesion

As part of its plan to combat poverty and reduce social inequalities, the French-speaking Community launches calls for projects every year with a combined value of 650,000 euros. In addition, two Resource Centres have been designated for a period of five years. They are the Walloon Anti-Poverty Network and the Brussels Forum against Inequalities, whose missions are:

- to organise, coordinate and give financial support to projects for the benefit of people living in poverty;
- to make their expertise available to and support any non-profit organisation or body recognised, approved and subsidised by the FWB that wishes to develop actions aimed at people living in poverty;
- the recruitment by each Resource Centre of two lived experience experts or social inequality reduction facilitators to work on the competencies of the French-speaking Community with a view to improving certain services for the most vulnerable population groups.

This year, in order to perpetuate the pilot projects that have run since 2018 on the issue of free meals for students in basic education (pre-school and primary) at the most disadvantaged schools (falling within the scope of the differentiated supervisory framework), the Government of the French-speaking Community should again adopt a decree aimed at ratifying these policies. The index-adjusted budget is more than 20 million euros per year.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The Government of the French-speaking Community has set out a commitment in its Community Policy Declaration to contribute substantially, through an overall and coordinated strategy, to efforts to rethink our lifestyles and consumption habits and to give a central place in its work to the response to the climate emergency. With this in mind, on the initiative of the Minister-President, a decree organising the coordination and reinforcement of the French-speaking Community's actions in favour of an ecological transition was approved on 1 July 2021. This sets out some clear objectives and ambitions: 1. Carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest; 2. A 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990; 3. A commitment to behavioural adaptation measures associated with the ecological transition and preserving biodiversity.

Including environmental clauses in public contracts is also one of the priority focuses of this Plan. The idea here is to propose a range of ecological requirements and ways of supporting biodiversity that can be included as criteria for the award of public contracts regardless of contract value. Standard clauses and/or a methodological guide will also be offered to contracting authorities.

In March 2023, the Ministry of the French-speaking Community implemented a completely new organigram: the General Sustainable Development Service and cross-cutting policies will be created, including a Sustainable Development Unit whose missions are linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that fall within the competency of the FWB.

For example, an exceptional fund of 1 billion euros has been earmarked for the renovation of school buildings. With this money, the French Community intends to support construction or renovation projects that are presented to it (and co-financed) by schools' governing bodies, representing a total investment of 1.5 billion euros. Four different calls for projects will be launched, targeting all networks and levels of education simultaneously. A certain number of funding eligibility criteria have been defined. For example, the construction or renovation work must be carried out with a view to the energy and climate transition. Architectural quality will also be taken into account, as well as the well-being of students and teachers.

- 1) The French-speaking Community is also supporting the achievement of the SDGs through projects to renovate this infrastructure and support for initiatives carried out by stakeholders at higher education establishments.

Recovery Plan:

- This refers to 185 million euros – out of the 401 million euro envelope obtained by the French-speaking Community – that will be allocated to help improve the quality of school infrastructure for compulsory education, adult education and higher education (apart from universities, which are the subject of a separate part of the Plan), particularly in terms of energy efficiency.
https://gouvernement.cfwb.be/files/Documents/Gouvernement/20210408_CP%20GFWB.pdf
- Universities: in May 2022, the Government of the French-speaking Community validated the list of projects which will receive support from the European recovery instrument (NextGenerationEU) and undertook to renovate ten university buildings on French-speaking campuses. These sums will be used to modernise existing infrastructure sustainably, to make French-speaking campuses more attractive to students and to contribute to the energy transition.
<https://glatigny.cfwb.be/home/presse--actualites/publications/plan-de-relevance-europeen--35-millions-deuros-seront-investis-pour-les-batiments-universitaires.publicationfull.html>

In connection with the Recovery Plan, 23,534,706 euros of additional European funding linked to the REPowerEU plan will allow a platform to be developed bringing together research on the energy transition in the French-speaking Community.

- 2) Annual calls for projects from ARES (the Academy of Research and Higher Education) to promote sustainable development within higher education institutions: section A offers a methodological framework for the implementation of a sustainable development approach that will be co-constructed with all components of the higher education institution, while under a 'conventional' section B, sustainable development action projects can be submitted to a selection panel.

<https://www.ares-ac.be/fr/developpement-durable/appels-a-projets>

In addition, ADEPS (the Physical Education, Sport and Outdoor Activity Authority) is developing a programme aimed in particular at **reducing its ecological footprint and raising awareness of sustainable development issues among sports stakeholders** in order to mobilise them, including through various model initiatives.

For example, efforts are being made in all ADEPS centres to:

- regulate hot water production;
- recover water;
- manage lighting and consumables;
- use environmentally friendly products, etc.

Woluwe Sports Centre was the first centre to gain the [Eco-Dynamic label](#) thanks to measures to reduce its energy expenditure: the installation of state-of-the-art heaters and hot air generators to adjust the temperature and cut emissions to a third of their previous level; the replacement of light fixtures to reduce power consumption to a quarter of its previous level; shower management (temperature, water pressure control); the introduction of waste sorting; the use of green cleaning products; the purchase of sustainable sports equipment; and efforts to raise the awareness of athletes and staff about the importance of their activities for the planet.

At the end of 2016, the roof of the ADEPS Sports Centre in the Sonian Forest was fitted with 3,450 [photovoltaic panels](#). In 2019, six other ADEPS sports centres – L'Hydrion, Les Deûs Oûtes, La Mosane, Le Warfaaz, La Fraineuse and Résidence Olympique – benefited from similar investments representing an annual output of 445 MWh and covering between 10 and 57% of the electricity needs of these sites.

In addition, the ADEPS Sports Centres in Spa and Jambes have undergone an environmental diagnosis by the environment unit of the Union wallonne des Entreprises (Walloon Business Federation), potentially paving the way to future [EMAS or ISO14001 certification](#) for all Walloon ADEPS centres.

Finally, it is also worth highlighting the French-speaking Community Master Plan, which aims to meet the requirements in terms of energy/carbon neutrality, namely to reach the level of 80 kWh/m²/year for the entire building stock for administrative activities and other purposes (culture, sport, youth work and justice).

These historic resources, ambitious commitments and large-scale projects are sure to contribute to the achievement of the environmental priorities of the Community policy declaration mentioned earlier.

Ultimately, these far-reaching measures are helping to make our institution a key player on which the whole of Belgium can rely in the context of overall environmental efforts.

Use of structural funds

For the period 2021-2027, Belgium will benefit from a budget of 2,320.4 million euros of European funding under the 'Investment for Growth and Jobs' Objective and 182.6 million euros under the Just Transition Fund. The Belgian Partnership Agreement was adopted in mid-December 2022, while the ERDF and ESF+ programmes were adopted at the end of December 2022.

For the ESF+, the Wallonia-Brussels ESF+ programme will contribute to lifelong learning (skills acquisition, work-study programmes, training, etc.). Priority will also be given to inclusive education (a need emphasised by the European Commission in its recommendations) and combating school dropout, as well as combating child poverty by increasing the participation of vulnerable children in childcare and extracurricular activities.

Strategic investments

In its cross-disciplinary ecological transition plan (adopted by the Government on 16 September 2021), the French-speaking Community intends to improve the energy performance of its buildings (public, school, university, cultural, sports and youth support facilities). Various reforms have been introduced for more sustainable infrastructure. In particular, a 10-year strategic plan for the renovation of school infrastructure has been approved with a total budget of 1 billion euros (see the point on the SDGs).

AVIS

Titre : Avant-projet d'avis portant sur le programme national de réforme 2023



Blijde Inkomstlaan 17-21 1040 Brussel
Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée 17-21 1040 Bruxelles
T 02 233 88 11
E mail@ccecrb.fgov.be
www.ccecrb.fgov.be

Avant-projet d'avis portant sur le Programme national de réforme 2023

Saisine

Dans le Programme national de réforme, les différents gouvernements du pays font rapport des réformes importantes qui sont intervenues au cours de l'année écoulée et des mesures qui devraient être prises dans un avenir proche pour stimuler la croissance et l'emploi et prévenir ou corriger les déséquilibres, ainsi que leurs projets concrets pour se conformer aux recommandations par pays de l'UE et à la réglementation européenne en matière budgétaire. Le PNR vient compléter les mesures budgétaires figurant dans le Programme de stabilité et se veut un prolongement des priorités du Plan national pour la reprise et la résilience (PNRR). Les instances du Conseil central de l'économie et du Conseil national du travail (les Conseils) souhaitent apporter leur contribution conjointe pour qu'elle soit annexée au Programme national de réforme (PNR) 2023.

Position des Conseils

1 Considérations générales

§1. Les Conseils sont, au niveau fédéral, les instances de discussion et d'avis autonome et les lieux d'appropriation des enjeux des politiques et des coordinations socio-économiques européennes ainsi que des recommandations européennes adressées à la Belgique. À cet égard, les interlocuteurs sociaux réitèrent ici leur volonté commune, maintes fois affirmée par les instances des deux Conseils, d'organiser l'information, le dialogue et les consultations dès le début du processus décisionnel pour que leurs débats, leurs travaux et leurs contributions puissent alimenter de manière effective et pertinente le positionnement des autorités politiques à tous les niveaux de pouvoir. Cette demande a été rappelée en janvier 2023, à l'occasion d'une table ronde organisée dans le cadre de la consultation menée par le Groupe sur le Semestre européen du Comité économique et social

européen (CESE) pour la préparation d'un avis d'initiative intitulé « Les recommandations du CESE pour une réforme vigoureuse du Semestre européen ».

- §2. Concernant, l'élaboration du PNR de 2023, la Chancellerie du Premier Ministre a transmis une information succincte aux deux secrétariats des Conseils sur le calendrier et la procédure d'élaboration ainsi que les thématiques qui seront reprises dans le PNR. Comme par le passé, le délai accordé est trop court pour que les Conseils puissent se mettre d'accord et formuler un avis complet.
- §3. Par ailleurs, le calendrier est aussi problématique. Il est essentiel d'organiser le dialogue et de procéder à la consultation des Conseils au moment opportun pour que soient pris en compte les avis et recommandations émis dans le corps même du programme.
- §4. Concernant l'évaluation par la Commission européenne de la situation socio-économique de la Belgique, une réunion conjointe CCE-CNT s'est tenue en juin 2022 avec des experts de la Commission européenne. La concomitance entre le rapport pays (« Country report ») et les propositions de recommandations (alors que dans le passé le rapport pays était publié en février, avant les propositions de recommandations) a réduit les possibilités de débat en amont des propositions de recommandations de la Commission.
- §5. Toutefois, de manière générale, les Conseils expriment leur satisfaction par rapport aux interactions établies depuis quelques années avec la Commission européenne. Ce dialogue leur apparaît comme complémentaire au cadre analytique et aux évaluations de la Commission européenne de la politique socio-économique du pays, du plan de relance et de résilience, des défis sous-jacents de ces évaluations mais aussi des intentions des autorités politiques du pays dans la perspective de la coordination des politiques socio-économiques au niveau européen ainsi que leurs articulations à tous les niveaux de pouvoir, en particulier dans la perspective des transitions verte et numérique et le renforcement de la résilience de l'économie.
- §6. Le Semestre européen s'inscrit dans le cadre de la gouvernance économique, sociale et de l'emploi de l'Union européenne (UE) : les États membres alignent leurs politiques économiques et budgétaires sur les règles arrêtées au niveau de l'UE. S'il a été, dans un premier temps, essentiellement un exercice économique, le Semestre européen a évolué, intégrant d'autres domaines

d'action pertinents dans le processus. À la suite de la proclamation du socle européen des droits sociaux en 2017, le Semestre européen propose également un cadre pour la coordination et le suivi des efforts déployés par les États membres afin d'atteindre les objectifs du socle. Le socle énonce 20 principes clés pour une Europe sociale forte en matière d'égalité des chances, d'accès au marché du travail, de conditions de travail équitables, ainsi que de protection et d'inclusion sociales¹.

- §7. Le Semestre européen comprend également une évaluation de la manière dont les États membres s'emploient à remplir les objectifs de développement durable des Nations unies.
- §8. Pour les Conseils (CCE et CNT), cette évolution est un élément essentiel à prendre en compte pour rendre effectif l'équilibre nécessaire entre les piliers économiques, sociaux et environnementaux dans le cadre de la coordination des politiques socio-économiques et des objectifs de la stratégie européenne.
- §9. À l'occasion du lancement du cycle du Semestre européen 2023², la Commission européenne rappelle qu'en 2022, les plafonds historiques des prix de l'énergie, les taux d'inflation élevés, les pénuries d'approvisionnement, l'augmentation des niveaux d'endettement et la hausse des coûts d'emprunt affectent les activités des entreprises et érodent le pouvoir d'achat des ménages. Elle estime que les choix de politiques économiques doivent privilégier la garantie d'un approvisionnement en énergie adéquat et abordable, la sauvegarde de la stabilité économique et financière et la protection des ménages et des entreprises vulnérables tout en préservant la viabilité des finances publiques.
- §10. La Commission européenne a énoncé les priorités du Semestre européen 2023, conformes aux objectifs de développement durable des Nations unies : favoriser la durabilité environnementale, la productivité, l'équité et la stabilité

¹ Le plan d'action sur le socle européen des droits sociaux définit l'ambition de l'UE pour une Europe sociale forte axée sur l'emploi, les compétences et l'inclusion sociale et inclut trois objectifs sociaux à atteindre d'ici à 2030 à l'échelle de l'UE : au moins 78 % de la population âgée de 20 à 64 ans devrait avoir un emploi; au moins 60 % des adultes devraient participer à des activités de formation chaque année ; le nombre de personnes menacées de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale devrait diminuer d'au moins 15 millions, dont au moins 5 millions d'enfants, par rapport à 2019.

² https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-autumn-package_en

macro-économique, en vue de stimuler la durabilité compétitive.

2 Travaux des Conseils depuis leur contribution au PNR 2022

§11. Ces derniers mois, les principaux dossiers en lien avec l'adoption du Programme national de réforme, le Plan de relance et de résilience et les recommandations européennes sur lesquels les deux Conseils ont été appelés à se prononcer concernent :

2.1 Le contexte socio-économique

§12. Au même titre que les États membres de référence, la Belgique a connu une série de chocs successifs : la crise du COVID-19 et la récession qui en a résulté, une reprise économique forte, une inflation importante (causée surtout par la perturbation des chaînes d'approvisionnement, en particulier de l'énergie) et la guerre en Ukraine qui a renforcé l'inflation et détérioré la conjoncture. L'intensité de ces chocs, la sensibilité différente des économies à l'augmentation des prix de l'énergie et les réactions de politique économique différent de pays à pays, ce qui peut entraîner des différences dans les évolutions des prix à la consommation, des salaires (et des coûts salariaux), de la rentabilité des entreprises et de la situation financière des ménages. Une explication détaillée de ces développements se trouve dans le document « Causes et conséquences économiques et sociales de l'inflation généralisée au niveau mondial » .

§13. Dans son avis du mois de décembre 2022³, le CCE rappelle que les gains de productivité représentent une condition nécessaire, mais non suffisante, de la prospérité de la population, du niveau de la cohésion sociale et du financement des investissements nécessaires à la réalisation des objectifs environnementaux européens, soit la neutralité carbone à l'horizon 2050. Les gains de productivité peuvent être le fondement d'une amélioration des revenus réels et de baisses des prix relatifs. Grâce à ces derniers, les entreprises peuvent aussi maintenir leur rentabilité, laquelle est déterminante pour les investissements futurs. Ces différents éléments sont

³ https://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/dpics/fichiers/2022-12-22-01-46-33_doc223280fr.pdf

nécessaires pour un maintien de la compétitivité. L'avis met ainsi en exergue diverses thématiques importantes en vue d'assurer la compétitivité de l'économie belge : la transition écologique et numérique, la R&D et l'innovation, l'éducation et la formation, la présence dans les chaînes de valeur à fort potentiel d'innovation, le dynamisme entrepreneurial, la concurrence et le dialogue social. Le CCE invite le Conseil national de productivité à traiter de façon prioritaire des effets sur la productivité du télétravail, du processus de création et de disparition des entreprises (y compris la difficulté croissante pour les entreprises débutantes d'atteindre le niveau de productivité moyen des entreprises établies) ainsi que du déficit de concurrence dans certains secteurs.

2.2 Le Plan de relance et de résilience

§14. Le 23 juin 2021, la Commission européenne a adopté une évaluation positive du Plan pour la reprise et la résilience (PRR) de la Belgique, qui permet à la Belgique de bénéficier de la Facilité pour la reprise et la résilience. En raison de la révision à la baisse du montant global attribué à la Belgique intervenue le 30 juin 2022, le plan national de la Belgique va devoir être adapté avant d'être à nouveau présenté à l'Union européenne. Le gouvernement fédéral, en accord avec les entités fédérées, rédige actuellement un plan d'investissement national adapté, qui tient notamment compte des risques d'exécution des projets, du respect des obligations européennes formelles et d'autres critères méthodologiques spécifiques. Les versements européens auront lieu au fur et à mesure de l'état d'avancement des investissements prévus dans ce plan et seront autorisés lorsque la Belgique atteindra les jalons et les cibles décrits dans son plan.

§15. Dans leur avis commun de juin 2021, le CCE et le CFDD ⁽⁴⁾ insistent sur le fait que le PRR doit s'inscrire dans une vision à long terme (incluant une stratégie de long terme pour les investissements publics) et servir à mener des politiques viables sur les plans financier et budgétaire tout en accordant une attention suffisante à la gestion des risques (tant sanitaires qu'économiques et environnementaux). Cette vision large doit fixer l'orientation globale, s'inscrire dans un processus structurel de développement durable et assurer

⁴ CCE et CFDD, « Avis intermédiaire sur les orientations stratégiques du projet de Plan pour la reprise et la résilience », CCE 2021-0440.

la cohérence entre les différents niveaux de pouvoir (fédéral, régional, européen). Elle nécessite une politique/stratégie industrielle intégrant les investissements en R&D, les investissements en matière de rénovation, d'énergie durable et de mobilité, la transition vers une économie circulaire et la transition numérique. Il convient également dans le cadre d'une telle politique de mener une réflexion sociétale sur l'indépendance stratégique de la Belgique par rapport à certains biens et services essentiels qui dépasse le cadre d'analyse de l'entreprise individuelle.

§16. Le PRR ne comble que partiellement un retard en matière d'investissement en Belgique. Le CCE appelle à une augmentation structurelle des investissements publics à 4 % du PIB par an d'ici 2030. Il regrette par ailleurs l'absence de réforme destinée à permettre une meilleure coordination budgétaire entre les entités fédérées. Les investissements privés doivent eux aussi être encouragés. En effet, la combinaison des investissements publics et privés a un effet multiplicateur plus grand sur l'économie ⁽⁵⁾.

§17. Deux avis ont également été adoptés conjointement par le CNT, le CCE et le CFDD concernant, d'une part, le volet relatif aux projets d'investissement (avis n° 2.205/2021-0760 du 23 mars 2021) et, d'autre part, le volet des réformes structurelles (avis n° 2.212/2012-0900 du 2 avril 2021). Concernant les projets d'investissements, les Conseils ont, en particulier, insisté sur la nécessité d'une bonne coordination entre l'État fédéral, les entités fédérées et les autorités locales afin de maximiser les effets positifs des investissements envisagés partout dans le pays.

§18. Plus récemment, dans un courrier commun adressé au secrétaire d'État pour la Relance et les Investissements stratégiques, le CNT et le CCE ont souhaité s'exprimer sur le point spécifique concernant l'enveloppe additionnelle issue du plan RePowerEU ⁽⁶⁾ que la Belgique devrait recevoir. Le principe selon lequel il est préférable de mobiliser les ressources là où elles ont le plus grand effet multiplicateur et de levier et d'opter pour les projets qui contribuent le

⁵ CCE, « Avis portant sur le Rapport annuel du Conseil national de la productivité », CCE 2021-2780

⁶ Faisant suite au mandat donné par les chefs d'État ou de gouvernement de l'Union dans la déclaration de Versailles, le plan REPowerEU vise à défaire progressivement l'UE de sa dépendance aux importations de combustibles fossiles à l'égard de la Russie, et ce dès que possible. À cette fin, la Commission entend recenser les projets, les investissements et les réformes les plus adaptés aux niveaux national, régional et de l'Union en concertation avec les États membres. Ces mesures visent à réduire la dépendance globale aux combustibles fossiles et à abandonner les importations de combustibles fossiles depuis la Russie.

plus aux objectifs économiques et sociétaux poursuivis leur semble essentiel pour une politique de relance effective, efficace et qualitative, conforme aux exigences d'un développement durable, pour la société belge. Ainsi aux yeux des Conseils, il semble judicieux d'éviter tout saupoudrage entre les différentes entités fédérales et fédérées de cette enveloppe issue du plan RePowerEU, en consacrant idéalement ce montant aux investissements de portée nationale, répondant aux enjeux énergétiques et de durabilité à l'horizon 2050 et s'insérant dans le cadre européen existant.

2.3 La transition climatique et énergétique

- §19. Sept conseils consultatifs de notre pays (fédéraux et régionaux) ont élaboré conjointement des recommandations sur la manière d'organiser la mise à jour du Plan national Énergie-Climat (PNEC) pour la période 2021-2030 ⁽⁷⁾. Cette mise à jour était prévue, mais elle revêt une importance accrue en raison de l'augmentation des ambitions climatiques de l'UE (notamment dans le cadre du programme « Fit for 55 ») et ce dans un contexte de crise énergétique internationale. Le PNEC précédemment soumis par la Belgique ne suffit plus pour atteindre les nouvelles ambitions.
- §20. Pour les conseils consultatifs, la révision du Plan national Énergie-Climat (PNEC) en 2023 offre à la Belgique l'opportunité de définir des actions fortes. Grâce à une coordination interfédérale et à l'association des interlocuteurs sociaux, ce plan révisé devrait se doter d'un cadre clair. Il faut une vision interfédérale intégrée avec des objectifs de long terme, des objectifs intermédiaires, une trajectoire et un ensemble de politiques et mesures pour réaliser ces objectifs.
- §21. À cet égard, les travaux récents des Conseils pointent des mesures phares pour le PNEC révisé.
- §22. Ainsi, le CCE et le CNT souscrivent depuis longtemps à l'importance de l'économie circulaire et ont déjà formulé dans ce cadre diverses recommandations. Le CCE a récemment émis un avis sur le projet de Plan d'action fédéral pour une économie circulaire ⁽⁸⁾.

⁷ <https://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/p/fr/1043/la-revision-du-plan-national-energie-climat-2030/3>

⁸ <https://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/p/fr/882/projet-de-plan-d-action-federal-pour-une-economie-circulaire/2>

- §23.** Dans leurs avis récents sur la mobilité, les deux Conseils proposent des pistes concrètes pour favoriser l'utilisation du rail ainsi que pour accroître le développement de la multimodalité (stratégie train-vélo, budget mobilité...). Ils ont émis un avis en vue des nouveaux contrats de gestion pour la SNCB et Infrabel, se sont prononcés sur les abonnements flexibles de la SNCB et ont proposé des pistes concrètes pour encourager le transport ferroviaire de marchandises.
- §24.** Dans cette même perspective d'encourager les modes de transport durable dans le cadre des déplacements entre le domicile et le lieu de travail, le CNT a conclu le 24 janvier 2023 la convention collective de travail (CCT) n° 164 concernant l'intervention de l'employeur pour les déplacements effectués à vélo par le travailleur entre son domicile et son lieu de travail. Cette CCT vise à régler les conditions d'octroi, le montant et les modalités de l'intervention de l'employeur pour ces déplacements. Il s'agit d'une convention collective de travail supplétive. Le Conseil a également émis l'avis n° 2.351 qui explicite la CCT.
- §25.** Le CNT a, en outre, adopté (toujours le 24 janvier 2023) la CCT n° 98/10 en vue d'adapter la liste des produits et services pouvant être acquis avec des éco-chèques et il a adopté l'avis corrélatif n° 2.344. Dorénavant, les éco-chèques pourront également être utilisés pour l'achat de tous les produits labellisés FSC et PEFC, le paiement des places ou abonnements de parkings spécifiquement destinés aux vélos et de tous les appareils électriques de seconde main, à l'exception des appareils hybrides, à savoir ceux qui peuvent fonctionner tant à l'électricité qu'avec des combustibles fossiles.
- §26.** Le CCE et ses homologues régionaux (Brupartners, CESE Wallonie et SERV) ont lancé récemment un appel commun à une collaboration et à une cohérence entre niveaux de pouvoir pour accélérer la réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre du parc de bâtiments, et ce tout en respectant les spécificités socio-économiques et les compétences de chaque entité. Un avis commun des Conseils économiques et sociaux porte sur « La rénovation du parc locatif résidentiel et du parc de copropriétés ».

2.4 Les pensions

- §27.** Par lettre du 2 juin 2022, les deux Conseils (CCE et CNT) ont été saisis d'une demande d'avis concernant la réforme des pensions.

- §28.** Conformément à une méthode de travail fixée d'un commun accord entre les interlocuteurs sociaux, les deux Conseils ont examiné les trois thématiques qui ont été soumises dans la demande d'avis. Ces thématiques sont : la soutenabilité financière et sociale du système de pension ; la généralisation et le renforcement des pensions complémentaires ; la modernisation de la dimension familiale.
- §29.** Les interlocuteurs sociaux ont formulé une série de questions spécifiques sur les trois thématiques⁹, sur la base desquelles des auditions ont eu lieu réunissant, d'une part, des experts académiques et scientifiques et, d'autre part, l'administration et des institutions publiques.
- §30.** Un avis commun et un rapport, approuvés le 8 mars 2023, sont le produit de ces travaux¹⁰. Le rapport doit être lu comme un complément de l'avis. Il contient les réponses et les données que les Conseils ont reçues pour répondre aux questions spécifiques des interlocuteurs sociaux sur les trois thématiques.
- §31.** Dans son préambule, l'avis rappelle que les interlocuteurs sociaux sont parties prenantes de l'ensemble du système de sécurité sociale en général, et du système de pension en particulier. C'est pourquoi ils doivent être impliqués à chaque étape de la réflexion, en ce compris les étapes préparatoires, et dans toute décision.
- §32.** Les Conseils soulignent aussi que la publication du rapport et de l'avis ne représente pas le point final de leurs travaux sur les trois thématiques sous revue.
- §33.** Le CNT a également adopté le rapport n° 127 du 28 juin 2022 qui concerne l'évaluation des progrès réalisés par les secteurs en matière d'harmonisation des pensions complémentaires.

⁹ <https://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/p/fr/1048/elements-factuels-sur-le-systeme-de-pensions-belge/31>

¹⁰ <https://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/p/fr/1046/la-soutenabilite-financiere-et-sociale-des-pensions-le-deuxieme-pilier-et-la-dimension-familiale-des-pensions>

2.5 Insertion des jeunes sur le marché du travail

- §34. Le CCE s'est penché dans un rapport récent¹¹ sur l'insertion des jeunes sur le marché du travail et l'impact de la crise du COVID-19 sur ce groupe de la population. Il considère que les jeunes devraient bénéficier de mesures prioritaires car ils ont été durement touchés par la crise sanitaire. Le rapport combine une analyse des groupes de jeunes les plus vulnérables sur le marché du travail avec une analyse de l'impact de la crise sanitaire et identifie certains défis à moyen et long terme qui pourraient influencer l'insertion des jeunes¹².
- §35. Dès avant que les mesures sanitaires visant à enrayer la diffusion du coronavirus ne touchent le marché du travail, quelques groupes de jeunes éprouvaient déjà des difficultés à s'y intégrer. Au moyen d'une analyse de quelques indicateurs du marché du travail (approche statique) et du parcours professionnel des jeunes au début de leur carrière (dynamique), les jeunes peu qualifiés, les jeunes issus de l'immigration et les jeunes NEET ont été identifiés comme des groupes sur lesquels la politique doit être axée afin d'améliorer l'insertion des jeunes sur le marché du travail et d'éviter que les jeunes vulnérables ne s'éloignent trop du marché du travail.
- §36. Le CCE estime également que le secteur public doit faire figure d'exemple dans le développement des trajets d'insertion professionnelle des jeunes. Il se prononce aussi sur le rôle des contrats de courte durée au début du parcours professionnel.

2.6 Emploi des travailleurs d'origine hors UE et non-discrimination

- §37. Dans son avis n° 2.361 du 5 avril 2023, le CNT s'est prononcé sur un projet de plan d'action établi suite à la Conférence sur l'emploi 2022 ayant pour thème l'emploi des travailleurs d'origine hors Union européenne.
- §38. Selon lui, les fonctions en pénurie et la réalisation de l'objectif d'emploi que la Belgique s'est fixé (80 % en 2030) justifient de favoriser autant que possible l'accès au marché du travail de toutes les personnes qui résident

¹¹ Ce rapport a été rédigé dans le cadre de l'article 5 de la loi révisée du 26 juillet 1996, qui prévoit la réalisation d'une analyse sur l'intégration des groupes à risques sur le marché du travail.

¹² https://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/dpics/fichiers/2022-09-23-09-39-22_CCE20222210Rapportjeunes.pdf

déjà légalement sur le territoire national. Il se prononce en conséquence en faveur d'un certain nombre de propositions contenues dans le plan d'action visant à rencontrer cet objectif. Le Conseil attire l'attention dans son avis sur un certain nombre de problématiques complémentaires qui pourraient être traitées au niveau fédéral et des entités fédérées.

§39. S'agissant des initiatives propres qui pourraient être prises en lien avec le plan d'action, le CNT indique dans ce même avis qu'il lui appartiendra d'examiner les éventuelles actualisations qu'il convient d'apporter aux instruments conventionnels qu'il a conclus en matière de non-discrimination et d'égalité de traitement. Le Conseil se propose également dans son avis de mener une campagne de sensibilisation avec le Service Public Fédéral de l'Emploi pour promouvoir les plans d'actions positives des entreprises. Une recommandation sur ce point aux secteurs qui seront amenés à élaborer un plan de diversité pourrait être également envisagée.

2.7 Return to work

§40. Depuis quelques années, une plateforme de concertation a été mise en place en matière de maintien et de reclassement des travailleurs en situation d'incapacité de travail. Le CNT est en charge de la coordination des travaux de cette plateforme qui constitue le cadre de concertation structurel, regroupant les acteurs impliqués dans le processus de retour au travail volontaire des personnes présentant un problème de santé.

§41. C'est dans ce contexte que le CNT a émis l'avis n° 2.288 du 26 avril 2022 dans lequel il s'est prononcé sur un ensemble de textes législatifs et réglementaires résultant de l'accord budgétaire fédéral 2022 qui prévoient un certain nombre de dispositions en matière de droit du travail, en lien avec le retour au travail des personnes présentant un problème de santé. Dans son avis, le Conseil a demandé de conserver une approche positive et globale du retour volontaire des personnes malades de longue durée.

§42. Le Conseil s'est par la suite prononcé (avis n° 2.311 du 19 juillet 2022) sur un avant-projet de loi modifiant la loi-programme du 27 décembre 2021 en ce qui concerne la cotisation de responsabilisation des employeurs ayant un flux excessif de travailleurs entrant en invalidité ainsi que sur deux projets d'arrêtés royaux d'exécution. Cet avis a été l'occasion pour le CNT de rappeler qu'il ne souscrit pas au principe de sanctions financières en tant que

mécanisme de responsabilisation et de souligner la nécessité de conserver une approche positive et globale ainsi qu'une bonne politique qui encourage les différents acteurs à la réintégration par un accompagnement adéquat, une information, une sensibilisation et des moyens plutôt que par le biais d'une responsabilisation financière. Pour le CNT, le caractère volontaire du processus de réintégration constitue, en effet, un facteur de succès de celui-ci.

2.8 Les finances publiques

§43. Pour mieux comprendre la problématique de la soutenabilité des finances publiques pour la Belgique, un rapport de diagnostic a été rédigé (24 janvier 2023). Ce rapport du CCE propose une définition détaillée du concept de finances publiques soutenables ainsi qu'une mise en perspective de la situation financière de l'autorité fédérale et des entités fédérées. Il comporte également les conclusions que le CCE a tirées de cette analyse. Le rapport met en exergue particulièrement le besoin d'un consensus interfédéral sur un objectif réaliste de niveau d'endettement à moyen terme. Des accords contraignants doivent être conclus entre les gouvernements fédéral et régionaux sur la contribution de chaque gouvernement à la réalisation de ce niveau d'endettement et sur le calendrier pour y parvenir. Les efforts doivent tenir compte de la conjoncture économique et de la nécessité de disposer d'une marge de manœuvre suffisante pour les investissements, notamment dans le contexte de la transition climatique.

§44. Dans une phase ultérieure, un examen plus approfondi de certains points d'attention spécifiques, tels que l'impact de la transition climatique sur les finances publiques (ou leur soutenabilité), sera effectué.

2.9 Lutte contre la fraude sociale

§45. Le CNT est structurellement associé, dans le cadre d'un protocole de coopération conclu avec le Service d'information et de recherche sociales (SIRS), à la politique de lutte contre la fraude sociale et fiscale menée par le gouvernement. Cette association lui permet d'assurer un suivi régulier des activités de la « European Labour Authority », et des questions que posent le Brexit ou encore la mise en place du Portail numérique unique « Venir travailler en Belgique ». Elle place le CNT au cœur de la stratégie en matière de lutte contre la fraude sociale.

§46. Dans ce contexte, le Conseil a émis récemment un certain nombre d'avis importants :

- **L'avis n° 2.286 du 6 avril 2022 sur le projet de plan d'action opérationnel pour la lutte contre la fraude sociale 2022, élaboré par le Service d'information et de recherche sociale (SIRS). Dans cet avis, le Conseil souhaite proposer un certain nombre de lignes directrices communes concernant le plan d'action opérationnel 2022 et en préparation du plan d'action opérationnel 2023.**
- **L'avis n° 2.326 du 16 novembre 2022 sur le projet de plan d'action opérationnel de lutte contre la fraude sociale du SIRS pour 2023-2024.**
- **L'avis n° 2.348 du 24 janvier 2023 sur le Multi Annual National Control Plan (MANCP), (plan de contrôle national pluriannuel) qui s'applique aux inspecteurs sociaux de la Direction générale Contrôle des lois sociales (DG CLS) et de la Direction générale Contrôle du bien-être au travail (DG CBE) et qui couvre une période de cinq ans.**

2.10 Contrats de travail intérimaire journaliers successifs

§47. Les interlocuteurs sociaux ont pris des engagements, dans l'avis du CNT n° 2.091 du 24 juillet 2018, quant aux recours inappropriés aux contrats de travail intérimaire journaliers successifs. Au terme d'un exercice d'évaluation sur la base des données chiffrées de l'ONSS, le Conseil a émis le 19 juillet 2022 un avis n° 2.310 dans lequel, tout en constatant un effort des entreprises à réduire le recours à ce type de contrats de travail, il a décidé néanmoins de mieux encadrer celui-ci.

§48. En conséquence, il a proposé de mettre en place une responsabilisation automatique des utilisateurs qui recourent de façon inappropriée aux contrats de travail intérimaire journaliers successifs, sous la forme du paiement d'une cotisation spéciale à la sécurité sociale par l'utilisateur. Le CNT assurera un suivi et un monitoring de ce nouveau système ainsi que de l'évolution de l'utilisation des contrats de deux jours successifs. Ce mécanisme est assorti d'une simplification administrative par une adaptation de la procédure d'information et de consultation prévue par la convention collective de travail n° 108 relative au travail temporaire et au travail intérimaire. Une convention collective de travail modificative a été conclue à ce sujet le 29 novembre 2022.

2.11 Projets-pilotes en matière d'organisation du travail innovante

- §49.** Dans le cadre de l'exécution de l'accord interprofessionnel 2017-2018, les partenaires sociaux ont pris l'initiative de soutenir des projets-pilotes en matière d'organisation du travail innovante et ont élaboré une approche globale ainsi qu'un cadre en vue de la mise en place de ces projets-pilotes (avis du CNT n° 2.170 du 30 juin 2020).
- §50.** Suite à l'adoption du cadre réglementaire, les entreprises et secteurs ont eu la possibilité d'introduire une demande de subvention entre le 1^{er} avril 2022 et le 31 mai 2022. Le 19 juillet 2022, le CNT a émis un avis motivé, dans lequel il propose au ministre du Travail d'accorder une subvention à 27 projets (26 projets introduits par des entreprises et un projet introduit par un secteur). Les projets peuvent être mis en œuvre à partir du 1^{er} octobre 2022. Ils auront une durée maximale de 18 mois. À l'issue de ces projets, le Conseil évaluera le système des projets-pilotes sur la base d'un rapport de synthèse des experts indépendants concernant les résultats des projets.

2.12 Mise en œuvre des instruments européens

Conditions de travail transparentes et prévisibles

- §51.** Le CNT a conclu le 27 septembre 2022 la convention collective de travail n° 161 concernant le droit pour un travailleur de demander une forme d'emploi comportant des conditions de travail plus prévisibles et plus sûres. La directive européenne 2019/1152 relative à des conditions de travail transparentes et prévisibles dans l'Union européenne trouve ainsi à s'appliquer, en Belgique, aux employeurs et travailleurs relevant du champ d'application de la loi relative aux CCT.
- §52.** Les partenaires sociaux considèrent qu'il convient d'encourager le passage vers une forme d'emploi comportant des conditions de travail plus prévisibles et plus sûres, tout en tenant compte des équilibres entre les besoins de l'employeur et ceux des travailleurs. Pour ce faire, cette CCT laisse une part importante au dialogue social au niveau de l'entreprise ou du secteur pour encadrer l'exercice de ce nouveau droit. Il est prévu une protection contre le traitement défavorable ainsi qu'une protection contre le licenciement pour le travailleur qui exerce les droits découlant de cette convention collective de travail.

§53. Le CNT a émis à la même date l'avis n° 2.314, qui explique la convention collective de travail et formule en outre un certain nombre de remarques sur le projet de loi transposant les autres obligations de cette directive en droit belge. Un dispositif légal restera en effet d'application en tant que régime supplétif pour les travailleurs et employeurs ne relevant pas du champ d'application de la loi relative aux CCT.

Conciliation de la vie privée et de la vie professionnelle

§54. La Directive (UE) 2019/1158 du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 20 juin 2019 concernant l'équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée des parents et des aidants est entrée en vigueur le 1^{er} août 2019. Afin d'assurer la transposition de l'un de ses volets, le Conseil a conclu le 27 septembre 2022 la convention collective de travail n° 162 sur les formules souples de travail. Celle-ci s'applique à tous les travailleurs et employeurs qui sont couverts par la loi du 5 décembre 1968 sur les conventions collectives de travail. Un régime légal supplétif restera d'application pour les employeurs et les travailleurs ne tombant pas sous le champ d'application de cette loi.

§55. Tant la directive européenne que les instruments de transposition, dont fait partie la convention collective de travail susmentionnée, ont pour but de renforcer l'égalité des chances entre les hommes et les femmes et de favoriser la participation des femmes au marché du travail en facilitant la conciliation entre vie professionnelle et vie familiale, tout en tenant également compte des besoins d'organisation de l'entreprise et des choix sociétaux. La CCT laisse une part importante au dialogue social au niveau de l'entreprise ou du secteur pour introduire ou initier des formules souples de travail dans l'entreprise.

§56. Parallèlement à la conclusion de cette convention collective de travail, le CNT a par ailleurs, dans sa convention CCT n° 103/6, adapté sa convention CCT n° 103 du 27 juin 2012 instaurant un régime de crédit-temps afin de neutraliser les effets négatifs d'une prise de formule souple de travail lors du passage de cette formule souple à un système de crédit temps, de diminution de carrière ou d'emploi de fin de carrière. Le CNT a par ailleurs émis concomitamment l'avis n° 2.315 qui explicite ces deux conventions collectives de travail et formule un certain nombre de remarques sur le projet de loi de transposition de la directive européenne en droit belge.

Federal learning Account

- §57.** Les Conseils ont rendu récemment un avis n° 2.359 sur un avant-projet de loi créant le Federal Learning Account (FLA). Le FLA s'inscrit dans l'un des projets (ILA) adoptés dans le cadre du plan de relance et de résilience (voir supra) et qui vise également à donner une exécution partielle à la recommandation du Conseil de l'UE du 16 juin 2022 relative aux comptes de formation individuels en vue de renforcer la formation des adultes en âge de travailler.
- §58.** Au niveau belge, un portail numérique national unique sera mis en place en créant une plateforme dénommée « Individual Learning Account » (ILA). Le Federal Learning Account (FLA) constituera une subdivision de l'Individual Learning Account et permettra d'afficher et de gérer les informations relatives aux droits de formation au niveau fédéral ainsi que les formations suivies par les travailleurs afin d'y être répertoriées et gérées.
- §59.** Dans leur avis, les Conseils rappellent tout d'abord un certain nombre d'exigences relatives aux contours et à l'architecture de la plateforme ILA dans son ensemble, plateforme qui abritera notamment le Federal Learning Account. La plateforme ILA devra ainsi être accessible et opérationnelle pour tous les citoyens, elle devra couvrir non seulement les droits et données relatives à la formation, mais également ceux relatifs à l'accompagnement de carrière et à la validation des compétences. Elle devra être une plateforme unique couvrant les droits tant au niveau fédéral que des entités fédérées et inclure également les travailleurs salariés frontaliers et indépendants qui travaillent en Belgique. La plateforme devrait être enfin conçue dans la perspective d'être interconnectée au niveau européen.
- §60.** Concernant plus particulièrement le Federal Learning Account, les Conseils ont examiné dans leur avis un certain nombre d'aspects techniques de l'avant-projet de loi. Selon eux, il est essentiel que le FLA soit conçu et organisé de manière à ce que l'enregistrement et la gestion des données soient aussi simples et automatisés que possible, en veillant au respect du principe « only once » et à limiter au maximum la charge administrative pour les entreprises, les secteurs, les travailleurs et toutes les parties concernées tout en tenant compte de la praticabilité (notamment en matière de délais). De manière générale, les Conseils pensent qu'il serait souhaitable d'utiliser au maximum les flux de données existants pour alimenter le FLA. Des

propositions sont formulées en ce sens dans leur avis.

Accords-cadres européens

- §61.** Le CNT est l'organe compétent pour la mise en œuvre en Belgique des accords-cadres adoptés par les partenaires sociaux européens. Dans ce cadre, il rend compte non seulement de la mise en œuvre au niveau interprofessionnel de ces accords mais réalise également un travail de centralisation des contributions des partenaires sociaux régionaux.
- §62.** Au cours des 12 derniers mois, le Conseil national du Travail a adopté le 6 avril 2022 le rapport n° 125 qui constitue le deuxième rapport de mise en œuvre concernant l'accord-cadre européen sur la numérisation adopté le 23 juin 2020. Ce rapport n° 125 contient un aperçu des actions menées en matière de transformation numérique dans le monde du travail en Belgique, poursuivies ou entreprises depuis le premier rapport n° 122 du 5 mai 2021. Ces mesures ont été prises tant au niveau interprofessionnel que par les secteurs et les Régions.

Annexe : Les recommandations européennes pour 2022-2023

L'Union européenne recommande à la Belgique :

- 1. de veiller, en 2023, à mener une politique budgétaire prudente, en particulier en maintenant la croissance des dépenses primaires courantes financées au niveau national en deçà de la croissance du PIB potentiel à moyen terme, compte tenu de la poursuite d'un soutien temporaire et ciblé aux ménages et aux entreprises les plus vulnérables aux hausses des prix de l'énergie et aux personnes fuyant l'Ukraine; à se tenir prête à adapter les dépenses courantes à l'évolution de la situation; à accroître les investissements publics en faveur des transitions écologique et numérique et de la sécurité énergétique en tenant compte de l'initiative REPowerEU, notamment en recourant à la facilité pour la reprise et la résilience et à d'autres fonds de l'Union; pour la période postérieure à 2023, à poursuivre une politique budgétaire visant à parvenir à des positions budgétaires à moyen terme prudentes et à garantir une réduction crédible et progressive de la dette et la viabilité budgétaire à moyen terme par un assainissement progressif, des investissements et des réformes; à donner la priorité aux réformes améliorant la viabilité budgétaire des soins de longue durée, notamment en encourageant une utilisation rentable des différents cadres de soins; à réformer les systèmes d'imposition et de prestations sociales afin de réduire les freins au travail en déplaçant la charge fiscale pesant sur le travail et en simplifiant le système d'imposition et de prestations sociales; à réduire les dépenses fiscales et rendre le système fiscal plus neutre en matière d'investissement ;**
- 2. de procéder à la mise en œuvre de son plan pour la reprise et la résilience, conformément aux jalons et cibles figurant dans la décision d'exécution du Conseil du 13 juillet 2021; à présenter les documents de programmation de la politique de cohésion 2021-2027 en vue de finaliser les négociations avec la Commission et d'entamer ensuite leur mise en œuvre ;**
- 3. de remédier aux pénuries de main-d'œuvre et à l'inadéquation des compétences, notamment en améliorant les performances et le caractère inclusif du système d'éducation et de formation, en améliorant la qualité et l'adéquation au marché du travail de l'enseignement et de la formation professionnels et en développant des parcours professionnels et une formation plus flexibles et attrayants pour les enseignants ;**

- 4. de réduire la dépendance globale à l'égard des combustibles fossiles en intensifiant les améliorations de l'efficacité énergétique et en réduisant l'utilisation de combustibles fossiles dans les bâtiments, en promouvant l'utilisation et la fourniture des transports publics ainsi que la mobilité douce et en accélérant le déploiement des énergies renouvelables et des infrastructures de réseau connexes en rationalisant davantage les procédures d'autorisation, notamment en réduisant la durée des procédures de recours et en adoptant des conditions-cadres pour stimuler les investissements dans les installations d'énergie solaire.**